The Trial of Oscar Wilde

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The Trial
of
Oscar Wilde

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FROM THE SHORTHAND REPORTS

Then gently scan your brither man,
Still gentler, sister woman,
Though they may gang a' kennin' wrang,
To step aside is human.

ROBT. BURNS.

PARIS
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The Trial

of

Oscar Wilde

PREFACE

"It is wrong for us during the greater part of the time to handle these questions with timidity and false shame, and to surround them with reticence and mystery. Matters relating to sexual life ought to be studied without the introduction of moral prepossessions or of preconceived ideas. False shame is as hateful as frivolity. It is a matter of pressing concern to rid ourself of the old prejudice that we "sully our pens" by touching upon facts of this class. It is necessary at all costs to put aside our moral, esthetic, or religious personality, to regard facts of this nature merely as natural phenomena, with impartiality and a certain elevation of mind."

PREFACE

I blame equally as much those who take it upon themselves to praise man, as those who make it their business to blame him, together with others who think that he should be perpetually amused; and only those can I approve who seek for truth with tear-filled eyes.

PASCAL.

In "*De Profundis,*" that harmonious and last expression of the perfect artist, Wilde seems, in a single page to have concentrated in guise of supreme confession, all the pain and passion that stirred and sobbed in his soul.

"*This New Life, as through my love of Dante I like sometimes to call it, is of course no new life at all, but simply the continuance, by means of development, and evolution, of my former life. I remember when I was at Oxford saying to one of my friends as we were strolling round Magdalen's narrow bird-haunted walks one morning in the year before I took my degree, that I wanted to eat of the fruit of all the trees in the garden of the world, and that I was going out into the world*

with that passion in my soul. And so, indeed, I went out, and so I lived. My only mistake was that I confined myself so exclusively to the trees of what seemed to me the sun-lit side of the garden, and shunned the other side for its shadow and its gloom. Failure, disgrace, poverty, sorrow, despair, suffering, tears even, the broken words that come from lips in pain, remorse that makes one walk on thorns, conscience that condemns, self-abasement that punishes, the misery that puts ashes on its head, the anguish that chooses sack-cloth for its raiment and into its own drink puts gall : — all these were things of which I was afraid. And as I had determined to know nothing of them, I was forced to taste each of them in turn, to feed on them, to have for a season, indeed no other food at all. "

Further on, he tells us that his dominant desire was to seek refuge in the deepest shade of the garden, for his mouth was full of the bitterness of the dead-sea fruit that he had tasted, adding that this tomb-like aroma was the befitting and necessary outcome of his preceding life of error.

We are inclined to think he deceived himself.

The day wherein he was at last compelled to face the horror of his tragical destiny his soul was tried beyond endurance. He strode deliberately, as he himself assures us, towards the gloomiest nook of

the garden, inwardly trembling perhaps, but proud notwithstanding... hoping against hope that the sun's rays would seek him out even there... or in other words, that he would not cease to live that *Bios theoretikos*, which he held to be the greatest ideal.

" From the high tower of Thought we can look out at the world. Calm, and self-centred, and complete, the æsthetic critic contemplates life, and no arrow drawn at a venture can pierce between the joints of his harness."

We all know what arrows struck him, arrows that he himself had sharpened, and that Society had not forgotten to tip with poison.

" Neither his own heedlessness nor the envious and hypocritical anger of his enemies, nor the snobbish cruelty of social reprobation were the true cause of his misfortunes. It was he himself who, after a time of horrible anguish, consented to his punishment, with a sort of supercilious disdain for the weakness of human will, and out of a certain regard and unhealthy curiosity for the sportfulness of fate. Here was a voluptuary seeking for torture and desiring pain after having wallowed in every sensual pleasure... Could such conduct have been due to aught else but sheer madness?

The true debauchee has no such object. He seeks

only for pleasure and discounts beforehand the conditions that Life dictates for the same; the conditions laid down containing no guarantee that the pleasure will be actually grasped except only in promise and anticipation. Later, too proud to acknowledge his cruel disappointment, he will gravely assure us that the bitterness left in the bottom of the goblet whose wine he has quaffed, has indeed the sweet taste that he sought after. Certain minds are satisfied with the fantasmagoria of their intelligence, whereas the voluptuary finds happiness only in the pleasure of realisation. In his heart he concocts for himself a prodigious mixture of sorrow and of joy, of suffering and of ecstacy, but the great world, wotting naught of this secret alchemy and judging only according to the facts which lie upon the surface, slices down to the same level, with the same stupid knife, the strange, beautiful flower, as well as the evil weed that grew apace.

Remy de Gourmont said of the famous author, Paul Adam, that he was "a magnificent spectacle." Wilde may be pronounced a painful problem. He seems to escape literary criticism in order to fall under the keen scalping knife of the analytical moralist, by the paradoxical fact of his apparently imperious purpose to hew out and fashion forth his life as a work of art.

" Save here and there, in *Intentions* and in his poems, the *Poem of Reading Gaol*, nothing of his soul has he thrown into his books; he seemed to desire, one can almost postulate as a certainty, the stupendous tragedy that blasted his life. From the abyss where his flesh groaned in misery, his conscience hovered above him contemplating his woeful state whilst he thus became the spectator of his own death-throes. " (1)

That is the reason why he stirs us so deeply.

Those who might be tempted to search in his work for an echo however feeble, of a new message to mankind, will be grievously disappointed. The technical cleverness of Wilde is undeniable, but the magnificent dress in which he has clothed it appears to us to have been borrowed. He has brought us neither remedy nor poison; he leads us nowhere, but at the same time we are conscious that he has been everywhere. No companion of ours is he, but all the companions we hold dear he has known. True he sat at the feet of the wise men of Greece in the Gardens of Academus, but the eurythmy of their gests fascinated him more than the soberness of their doctrines. Dante he followed in all his subterranean travels and peregrinations, but all that

(1) Hugues Rebell.

he has to relate to us after his frightful journeyings is merely an ecstatic description of the highly-wrought scenery that he had witnessed.

" I packed all my genius, said he, into my life, I have put only my talent into my works ". Unfaithful to the principle which he learnedly deduced in *Intentions,* viz : that the undivided soul of a writer should incorporate itself in his work, even as Shakespeare pushing aside the " *impulses that stirred so strongly within him that he had, as it were perforce, to suffer them to realize their energy, not on the lower plane of actual life, where they would have been trammelled and constrained and so made imperfect, but on that of the imaginative plane of art,* "... he came to confound the intensity of feeling with the calmness of beauty. Possessed of a mind of rare culture, he nevertheless only evoked, when he touched Art, harmonious vibrations perhaps, but vibrations which others, after all said and done, had already created before him. He succeeded in producing nothing more than a splendid and incomparable echo. The most that can be said is that the music he had in his soul he kept there, living all the time a crowded, ostentatious life, and distinguishing himself as a superlative conversationalist. Be this as it may, posterity cannot judge

us according to those possibilities of our nature which were never developed. However numerous may be the testimonies in our favour, she cannot pronounce excepting on the works, or at least, the materials left by the workman. It is this which renders so precarious the actor's fleeting glory, as it likewise dissipates the golden halo that hovers over the brilliant Society *causeur*. Nothing remains of Mallarmé excepting a few cunningly wrought verses, inferior to the clearer and more profound poems of his great master, Baudelaire. Of Wilde nothing will remain beyond his written works which are vastly inferior to his brilliant epigrammatic conversation.

In our days, the master of repartee and the after-dinner speaker is fore-doomed to forgetfulness, for he always stands alone, and to gain applause has to talk down to and flatter lower-class audiences. No writer of blood-curdling melodramas, no weaver of newspaper novels is obliged to lower his talent so much as the professional wit. If the genius of Mallarmé was obscured by the flatterers that surrounded him, how much more was Wilde's talent overclouded by the would-be witty, shoddy-elegant, and cheaply-poetical society hangers-on, who covered him with incense? One of his devoted literary courtezans, who has written a life of Wilde, which

is nothing more than a rhapsodidal panegyric of his intimacy with the poet, tells us that the first attempts of the sparkling conversationalist were not at all successful in Paris drawing-rooms. In the house of Victor Hugo seeing he had to let the veteran sleep out his nap whilst others among the guests slumbered also, he made up his mind to astonish them. He succeeded, but at what a cost! Although he was a verse writer, most sincerely devoted to poetry and art, and one of the most emotional and sensitive and tender-hearted amongst modern wielders of the pen he succeeded only in gaining a reputation for artificiality.

We all know his studied paradoxes, his five or six continually repeated tales, but we are tempted to forget the charming dreamer who was full of tenderness for everything in nature.

"It is true that Mallarmé has not written much, but all he has done is valuable. Some of his verses are most beautiful whilst Wilde seemed never to finish anything. The works of the English aesthete are very interesting, because they characterize his epoch; his pages are useful from a documentary point of view, but are not extraordinary from a literary standpoint. In the *Duchess of Padua*, he imitates Hugo and Sardou; the

Picture of Dorian Grey was inspired by Huysmans; *Intentions* is a *vade-mecum* of symbolism, and all the ideas contained therein are to be found in Mallarmé and Villiers de l'Isle-Adam. As for Wilde's poetry, it closely follows the lines laid down by Swinburne. His most original composition is *Poems in Prose*. They give a correct idea of his home-chat, but not when he was at his best; that no doubt, is because the art of talking must always be inferior to any form of literary composition. Thoughts properly set forth in print after due correction must always be more charming than a finely sketched idea hurriedly enunciated when conversing with a few disciples. In ordinary table-talk we meet nothing more than ghosts of new-born ideas foredoomed to perish. The jokes of a wit seldom survive the speaker. When we quote the epigrams of Wilde, it is as if we were exhibiting in a glass case, a collection of beautiful butterflies, whose wings have lost the brilliancy of their once gaudy colours. Lively talk pleases, because of the man who utters it, and we are impressed also by the gestures which accompany his frothy discourse. What remains of the sprightly quips and anecdotes of such celebrated *hommes d'esprit*, as Scholl, Becque, Barbey d'Aurevilly! Some stories of the XVIIIth. century have

been transmitted to us by Chamfort, but only because he carefully remodelled them by the aid of his clever pen." (1)

These opinions of Rebell questionable though they may be, show us plainly something of the charm and the weakness of Wilde.

A perfect artist desiring to leave his mark on the temple-columns of Fame must not live among his fellow men ambitious to taste the bitterness and the sweetness alike of every caress of existence, but submit himself pitilessly to the thraldom of the writing desk. Some authors may produce masterpieces amidst the busy throng; but there are others who lose all power of creation unless they shut themselves up for a time and live severely by rote. When Wilde was dragging out a wretched life in the sordid room of a cheap, furnished hotel, where he eventually died, did he ever remember while reading Balzac by the flickering light of his one candle that the great master of French literature often sought solitude and wrestled for eighteen hours at a stretch with the demon of severe toil? Did he ever repeat the doleful wail of the Author of *La Comédie Humaine* who was sometimes heard to exclaim in sad tones:

(1) Hugues Rebell.

" I ought not to have done that... I ought to have put black on white, black on white... "

Few experiments are really necessary for the literary creator who seeks to analyse the stuff of which Life is composed in order to dissolve for us all its elements and demonstrate its ever-present underlying essence. The romance writer must stand away from the crowd, if only for a time, and reflect deeply upon what he has seen and heard. The power of thought, to be free and fruitful, cannot flourish without the strength of ascetism. We must yield to that law which decrees that action may not be the twin-sister of dreams. Those who live a life of pleasure can only give us colourless falsehoods when they try to depict sincerity of feeling. The confessions of sensualists resemble volcanic ashes.

Wilde himself give us the key to his errors and his weakness :

" Human life is the one thing worth investigating. Compared to it there is nothing else of any value. It is true that as one watches life in its curious crucible of pain and pleasure, one cannot wear over one's face a mask of glass nor keep the sulphurous fumes from troubling the brain and making the imagination turbid with monstrous fancies and misshappen dreams. There are poisons so subtle that to know their properties one has to

sicken of them. There are maladies so strange that one has to pass through them if one seeks to understand their nature. And yet what a great reward one receives! How wonderful the whole world becomes to one! To note the curious, hard logic of passion and the emotional, coloured life of the intellect — to observe where they meet, and where they separate, at what point they are in unison and at what point they are in discord — there is a delight in that! What matter what the cost is? One can never pay too high a price for any sensation." (1)

The brain becomes dulled at this sport, which it would be illusory to call a study. He who uses his intellect to serve only his sensuality can produce nothing elaborate but what is artificial. Such is the dilemma of Wilde, whose collections of writings is like a painted stage-scene, mere garish canvas, behind which there is never anything substantial.

"When I first saw Wilde, he had not yet been seared by the brand of general reprobation. Often I changed my opinion of him, but at first I felt the enthusiasm which young literary aspirants always feel for those who have made their mark; then the law-suit took place, followed by the dramatic thunder-clap of a criminal prosecution; and my soul revolt-

(1) Sebastian Melmoth (Oscar Wilde).

ed as if some great iniquity had been consummated. Later on, it seemed to me that the man of fashion had swallowed up the literary god, his baggage seemed light, and his brilliant butterfly-life had perhaps been of more importance to him than the small pile of volumes bearing his name.

" To-day, I seem clearly to understand what sort of a man he was—extraordinary beyond a doubt; but never has artificial sentiment been so cunningly mingled with seemingly natural simplicity and pulsating pleasure in one and the same man. " (1)

" I must say to myself that I ruined myself, and that nobody great or small can be ruined except by his own hand. I am quite ready to say so. I am trying to say so, though they may not think it at the present moment. This pitiless indictment I bring without pity against myself. Terrible as was what the world did to me, what I did to myself was far more terrible still.

I was a man who stood in symbolic relations to the art and culture of my age. I had realised this for myself at the very dawn of my manhood, and had forced my age to realise it afterwards. Few men hold such a position in their own lifetime, and have it so acknowledged. It is usually discerned, if discerned at all, by the historian, or the critic, long after both the man and his

(1) Hugues Rebell.

age have passed away. With me it was different. I felt it myself, and made others feel it. Byron was a symbolic figure, but his relations were the passion of his age and its weariness of passion. Mine were to something more noble, more permanent of more vital issue, of larger scope.

The gods had given me almost everything. But I let myself be lured into long spells of senseless and sensual ease. I amused myself with being a flâneur, *a dandy, a man of fashion. I surrounded myself with the smaller natures and the meaner minds. I became the spendthrift of my own genius, and to waste an eternal youth gave me a curious joy. Tired of being on the heights, I deliberately went to the depths in the search for new sensation. What the paradox was to me in the sphere of thought, perversity became to me in the sphere of passion. Desire, at the end, was a malady, or a madness, or both. I grew careless of the lives of others. I took pleasure where it pleased me, and passed on. I forgot that every little action of the common day makes or unmakes character, and that therefore what one has done in the secret chamber one has some day to cry aloud on the housetop. I ceased to be lord over myself. I was no longer the captain of my soul, and did not know it. I allowed pleasure to dominate me. I ended in*

horrible disgrace. There is only one thing for me now, absolute humility. (1)"

This confession of irreparable defeat while being exceedingly dolorous, is unfortunately, rendered still further painful by other pages which contradict it, and almost tempt us to doubt its sincerity, in spite of the fact that Wilde was always sincere for those who knew how to read between the lines and enter into his spirit.

" There is no doubt that he was truly a most extraordinary man, endowed with striking originality, but a man who at the same time took more than uncommon care to hide his gifts under a cloak bought in some conventional bazaar which made a point of keeping abreast with the fashions of the day. " (2)

What brought about his downfall was the mad idea that possessed him of the possibility of employing in the service of noble aspirations all, without exception, all the passions that moved and agitated his human soul. Everyone of us is, no doubt, peopled at times with mysterious spirits, ephemeral apparitions, which like the wild beasts that Christ long ago cast out of the Gadarene swine, tear themselves to pieces in internecine warfare. It is with

(1) *De Profundis.*
(2) Hugues Rebell.

such soldiers as these, who very seldom obey the superior orders of the higher intellect, or desert and rebel against us at the opportune moment, that we are called upon to withstand the onslaught of a thousand enemies. Wilde made the grand mistake of trying to understand them all. He believed that they were capable of adapting themselves to that powerful instinct which animated him, and which directed him, wherever he wandered or wherever he went, towards the spirit of Beauty. This error lasted long enough perhaps to convince him of the power that was born in him, but unfortunately, the revelation of his error came too late.

My object in this preface is not to write the life of Wilde.

I have only to do with the Writer, for the Man is yet too much alive and his wounds have scarcely ceasedbleeding! In the presence of still living sorrow, crimson-tinged, respect commands us to stand bareheaded; before the scarred face of woe the voice is dumb; we should, above all, endeavour rather to ignore the accidents that thrust themselves into a life and try to discover the great, calm soul, beautiful in its melancholy, which though pained and suffering, has never ceased to be nobly inspired. To prove that this was true in the case of Wilde, we may have

recourse to some of those who knew him well and who form a great "cloud of witnesses," testifying to the veracity of the things we have laid down.

Mr. Arthur Symons, a keen and large-minded critic, a friend of Wilde's, and an elegant and forcible writer to boot, in his recent volume: "*Studies in Prose and Verse,*" characterizes Wilde as a "poet of attitudes," and we cannot do better than quote a few lines from the fine article which he consecrated to our author:

"*When the "Ballad of Reading Gaol" was published, he said, it seemed to some people that such a return to, or so startling a first acquaintance with, real things, was precisely what was most required to bring into relation, both with life and art an extraordinary talent so little in relation with matters of common experience, so fantastically alone in a region of intellectual abstractions. In this poem, where a style formed on other lines seems startled at finding itself used for such new purposes, we see a great spectacular intellect, to which, at last, pity and terror have come in their own person, and no longer as puppets in a play. In its sight, human life has always been something acted on the stage; a comedy in which it is the wise man's part to sit aside and laugh, but in which he may also disdainfully take part, as in a carnival, under any mask. The unbiassed,*

scornful intellect, to which humanity has never been a burden, comes now to be unable to sit aside and laugh, and it has worn and looked behind so many masks that there is nothing left desirable in illusion. Having seen, as the artist sees, further than morality, but with so partial an eyesight as to have overlooked it on the way, it has come at length to discover morality in the only way left possible, for itself. And, like most of those who, having "thought themselves weary," have made the adventure of putting thought into action, it has had to discover it sorrowfully, at its own incalculable expense. And now, having become so newly acquainted with what is pitiful, and what seems most unjust, in the arrangement of human affairs, it has gone, not unnaturally, to an extreme, and taken, on the one hand, humanitarianism, on the other realism, at more than their just valuation, in matters of art. It is that odd instinct of the intellect, the necessity of carrying things to their furthest point of development, to be more logical than either life or art, two very wayward and illogical things, in which conclusions do not always follow from premises.

His intellect was dramatic, and the whole man was not so much a personality as an attitude...

And it was precisely in his attitudes that he was most sincere. They represented his intentions; they stood for

the better, unrealised part of himself. Thus his attitude, towards life and towards art, was untouched by his conduct; his perfectly just and essentially dignified assertion of the artist's place in the world of thought and the place of beauty in the material world being in nowise invalidated by his own failure to create pure beauty or to become a quite honest artist. A talent so vividly at work as to be almost genius was incessantly urging him into action, mental action.

Realising as he did, that it is possible to be very watchfully cognisant of that "quality of our moments as they pass," and so shape them after one's own ideal much more continuously and consciously than most people have ever thought of trying to do, he made for himself many souls, souls of intricate pattern and elaborate colour, webbed into infinite tiny cells, each the home of a strange perfume, perhaps a poison. Every soul had its own secret, and was secluded from the soul which had gone before it or was to come after it. And this showman of souls was not always aware that he was juggling with real things, for to him they were no more than the coloured glass balls which the juggler keeps in the air, catching them one after another. For the most part the souls were content to be playthings; now and again they took a malicious revenge, and became so real that even the juggler was aware of it. But when they

became too real he had to go on throwing them into the air and catching them, even though the skill of the game had lost its interest for him. But as he never lost his self-possession, his audience, the world, did not see the difference. (1)"

Thus not wishing to live for himself, Wilde was surprised into living mainly for others, and his ever-present desire to astonish was one of the prime causes that led to his overthrow. Yet, in spite of this, what riches of the mind, one easily divines him to possess, if for a moment we peer beyond the mobile curtain of his paradoxes. Those who listened to him, this modern St. Chrysostom, on whose lips there was ever an ambiguous smile, could not fail to see that he spoke to himself, was occupied in translating that which was passing in his mind, trying in a sense, to ravish his auditors and plunge them even into greater, though only ephemeral, ravishment, whilst ushering them into an absolutely unreal and immaterial kingdom of capricious fantasy, and they will remember that he was sometimes astonishingly profound and grave, and always charming, paradoxical, and eloquent. His mind constantly dwelt upon the questions of Art and Aesthetics. In *Intentions* he laid down serious problems, which in themselves

(1) *Studies in Prose & Verse*, by Arthur Symons. (Lond. 1905).

bore every appearance of contradiction, and which any attempt to resolve would, at the outset, appear puerile and ambitious.

For instance :— Is lying a fundamental principle of Art, that is to say, of every art?

Is it possible for there to be perfect concordance between a finely ordered and pure life, and the worship of Beauty; or, are we to consider such a consummation as utterly impossible and chimerical?

Must there be a permanent and necessary divorce between Ethics and Aesthetics?

Ought we, beneath the flowery mask of a borrowed smile, allow ourselves to be carried away by all the waves of instinct?

The art of Criticism, is it superior to Art? The "Interpreter can he be superior to the creator? Must we modify the profound axiom, "to understand is to equal," not by reducing it to that other axiom, more profound perhaps, "to understand is to achieve," but by modifying it with that, which, at the first glance looks at least passingly strange "to understand is to surpass?"

Such are the questions which Wilde postulated in *Intentions* and worked out with great audacity, but with no higher object than to win admiration, and all

this with the indifferent suppleness of a conjuror of words.

Intentions is a study of artificial genius, culture, and instinct, and, for this reason, it forms a most curious production. In itself it can hardly be termed a magistral work, inasmuch as all the theories enunciated in it are, at least, twenty years old, and appear to us to-day quite worn out and decrepit. As much may be said, also, for the theories put forward by our young, contemporaneous artists who undertake to discuss all things in Heaven and Earth, and whose vapourings on Life, Nature, Social Art and other things—especially other things—are no more guaranteed against mortality than the doctrines above specified. Let them remember, in reading Wilde's work, that their Aesthetical doctrines will soon become as antiquated, and that it is no bid for lasting fame to write flashy novels, pretty verses, high-flown or realistic dramas, pessimistic or optimistic plays, imbued with Schopenhaurian and Nitzschien principles, since the crying need of the time is for sincere work. All the doctrines ever invented are mere tittle-tattle, only fit to amuse brainless ladies wanting in beauty, or minds stricken with positive sterility.

It is not inexact that in *Intentions* one meets with a

profound truth now and again, but the dressing of it is so paradoxical that we run a risk of misinterpreting all that may animate it of genuine fitness and sincerity.

Wilde may truly be denominated the last representative of that English art of the XIXth. century, which beginning with Shelly, continuing with the Pre-Raphaelites and culminating with the American painter, Whistler, endeavours purposely to set forth an ideal and elegant expression of the world.

The mistake of these men lies in the belief that Art was made for Life; whereas it is, as a matter of fact, quite the contrary. Life has no other value, except as subject-matter, for poet and painter. These are excentric theories, certainly, but then, what on earth, does it matter about theories? Do not they serve the great artist to make his genius more puissant, and enable him to concentrate all his forces in the same direction by uniting instead of scattering them? With, or in spite of his theories, Shelly wrote his poems and Whistler painted his pictures; if their æsthetic basis was bad, one, at least, cannot pretend that it was dangerous, since it enabled them to accomplish their masterpieces. Wilde, unfortunately, was an æsthete before he was a poet, and produced his works somewhat in the spirit of bravado. He had been told that he could not

create aught of good : the reply, triumphant and crushing was, the *Picture of Dorian Grey*. He is a literary problem ; and in considering him, we are struck with the unwarranted corruption, by his acquaintances, of a fine artistic sensibility.

The fashionable drawing-rooms of the West-End brought about his downfall, or rather, and it amounts to the same thing : his frank and undisguised desire to please and to dazzle them proved his undoing. Possibly the same misfortune would have overtaken Merimée, had it not been for his lofty and vigorous intelligence; as it was, he lost more than once, most precious time in composing " *Chambres bleues,* " when he was undoubtedly capable of producing another " *Colomba,* " and other variations of " *Vases étrusques.* "

With all this, let us be thoroughly just; *Intentions* is far from containing anything but mere paradoxes. Those that we find there are at any rate of very diverse kinds. Some are pure verbal amusements, and may be thrust aside after the moment's attention that they snatched from our surprise. Others belong to a nobler family of ideas and awaken in us the lasting and fecund astonishment of the paradox which is born sound and healthy, because it concerns a new truth. Into the mental landscape, these

paradoxes introduce that sudden change of perspective, which forces the mind to rise or to descend, and thus causes us to discover other horizons. What a grievous error would it be on our part not to feel something of that immense and exhaustive love of beauty which haunted the soul of Wilde until the bitter end? However artificial his work may appear at the first glance, there is still sufficient left of the man which was incomparable. We instinctively feel that he belonged to the chosen race of those upon whom the " spirit of the hour " had laid his magic wand, and who give forth at the cunning touch of the Magician some of the finest notes of which our stunted human nature is capable. Men thus endowed, enjoy the rare privilege of being unable to proffer a single word, without our perceiving however confusedly, the splendid harmony of an almost universal accompaniment of ideas. The choir, their eyes fixed upon the eyes of the master-musician, follows his inspired gestures with jealous care, and seeks to interpret his every nod and movement.

None but an artist could have written the admirable pages on Shakespeare, Greek Art, and other elevated themes that are to be found in the works of Oscar Wilde.

More than an artist was he, who noted down the suggestive thought : that the humility of the matter of a work of art is an element of culture. If therefore, we hear him exclaim that " thought is a sickness, " we must bear in mind that this is simply an analysis of the phrase : " *We live in a period whose reading is too vast to allow it to become wise, and which thinks too much to be beautiful.* "

Our eyes can no longer penetrate the esoteric meaning of the statues of the olden times, beautiful with glorified animality, and which have alas, become for us little more than the tongue-tied offspring of the inspiring god Pan, dead beyond all hope of rebirth. Our brains have become stupified through the heaviness of the flesh, and this, perhaps, because we have treated the flesh as a slave.

" *The worship of the senses, wrote Wilde, has often, and with much justice, been decried; men feeling a natural instinct of terror about passions and sensations that seem stronger than themselves, and that they are conscious of sharing with the less highly-organised forms of existence. But it is probable the true nature of the senses has never been understood, and that they have remained savage and animal merely because the world has sought to starve them into submission or to kill them by pain, instead of aiming at making them elements of a*

new spirituality, of which a fine instinct for beauty will be the dominant characteristic." (1).

In these lines, we may perhaps find the key of a certain metamorphosis in the poet's life, before Circe, that terrible sorceress, had passed his way.

" Who knows not Circe,
The daughter of the Sun, whose charmed cup
Whoever tasted lost his upright shape,
And downward fell into a grovelling swine ?".
(Milton : Comus, 50-53.)

The infant King of Rome, we are told, looking out from a window of the Louvre one day, at the muddy street where young children were playing,—sad in the midst of a perfumed and divinely flattering court,—cried out : " I too, would like to roll myself in that beautiful mud. " We are inclined to think from a sentimental outlook, that Wilde also had the same morbid desire; but, he was worth better things; and there were times in his life when serene aspirations moved his heart before he sat down to the festive board of Sin.

He had a pronounced tendency towards the *discipulat*; used to question youths about their studies and their mind, showing as much interest in

(1) Sebastian Melmoth.

them as a spiritual confessor, inebriating himself with their enthusiasm, and surrounding himself more and more with a medley of different friends. A vigorous pagan, ardent, intoxicated with souvenirs of Antiquity, heart-sick of his worldly successes, he dreamed perhaps of living over again :

Ces héroïques jours où les jeunes pensées
Allaient chercher leur miel aux lèvres d'un Platon.

But this *artificiel de l'art* was, although he wotted it not, a man who rioted in the good things of life. He sought to inculcate in himself a quiet spirit which believes itself invulnerable.

And when we reach the true culture that is our aim, we attain to that perfection of which the saints have dreamed, the perfection of those to whom sin is impossible, not because they make the renunciations of the ascetic, but because they can do everything they wish without hurt to the soul, and can wish for nothing that can do the soul harm, the soul being an entity so divine that it is able to transform into elements of a richer experience, or a finer susceptibility, or a newer mode of thoughts, acts or passions that with the common would be commonplace, or with the uneducated ignoble, or with the shameful vile. » (1).

(1) *Intentions.*

This passage shows us a state of things very far removed from the old dream of antiquity.

He forgot, alas! the puritanism and sublime discourses of Diotime, which have been so finely pictured for us by Plato, to wallow in the orgies of the Island of Capria.

Before that Criminal Court, where he vainly struggled so as "not to appear naked before men," we hear him proclaim what he had himself desired and perhaps attained.

What interpretation, asked the judge, can you give us of the verse :

I am the Love which dares not tell its name

"The Love referred to', replied Wilde, "is that which exists between a man of mature years and a young man ; the love of David and of Jonathan. It is the same love that Plato made the basis of his philosophy; it is that love which is sung in the Sonnets of Shakespeare and of Michael-Angelo ; it is a profound spiritual affection, as pure as it is perfect. It is beautiful, pure and noble ; it is intellectual, the love of a man possessing full experience of life, and of a young man full of all the joy and all the hope of the future ".

There in that struggle in the midst of thick dark-

ness, this must have been the cry of his tormented soul, a breath of pure air as he passed, a perfumed memory... then there came a few arrow flights badly winged which only wounded his own heart.

He defended himself in an indifferent way according to some people, although it must be admitted that he gave the answers that were necessary and becoming, and, in some cases, compelled his judges, who were no better than the mouth-pieces of the crowd, to confess the hatred that the worship of beauty had inspired.

" However strange may have been his attitude, that attitude could not have been indifferent to anyone. Those who have been fortunate enough to laugh at the portrait that René Boylesve has drawn of the æsthete in his fine novel " Le Parfum des Iles Borromées," would find it difficult to make a mock of the man who accepted with superb disinterestedness, the torture that he knew beforehand the judges would inevitably inflict upon him.

Although he may not have been a great poet, although the pretext of his equivocal mode of living was taken to condemn him, we cannot lose sight of the art and of the literary craftsman that were condemned at the same time with him." (1).

(1) Hugues Rebell.

We know no spectacle so ridiculous as the British public in one of its periodical fits of morality. In general, elopements, divorces, and family quarrels, pass with little notice. We read the scandal, talk about it for a day, and forget it. But once in six or seven years our virtue becomes outrageous. We cannot suffer the laws of religion and decency to be violated. We must make a stand against vice. We must teach libertines that the English people appreciate the importance of domestic ties. Accordingly some unfortunate man, in no respect more depraved than hundreds whose offences have been treated with lenity, is singled out as an expiatory sacrfiice. If he has children, they are to be taken from him. If he has a profession, he is to be driven from it. He is cut by the higher orders, and hissed by the lower. He is, in truth, a sort of whipping-boy, by whose vicarious agonies all the other transgressors of the same class are, it is supposed, sufficiently chastised. (1)

This bitter denunciation of English mock-modesty by the brilliant Essayist rests upon thoroughly justifiable grounds. Once again in the dolorous history of humanity, the grotesque farce was enacted of chasing forth the scapegoat into the wilderness to bear away the sins of the people. But, in this

(1) *Macaulay.*

instance, the unhappy creature was not only laden with the sins of the tribe; a heavier burden still had been added to all the others : the fearful burden of the mad, unreasoned hatred of the sinners. Indeed he, whose share in the general load of sin was the greatest, sought to add more hatred than all the others to the great fardel under which the victim staggered, and believing himself so much the more innocent that the abjection of the unfortunate wretch was complete, would have been glad had it been in his power to help even the public hangman in the execution of his nefarious task. We have observed that through some diabolical strain in human nature, the evil joy which creates scandal and gives rise to a man's downfall, increases in intensity if the victim happens to be a man of superior rank and talent.

On voit briller au fond des prunelles haineuses,
L'orgueil mystérieux de souiller la Beauté.

How great must have been the delighted intoxication of numberless weak minds when they were impelled, in the midst of a silence that braver and clearer spirits dared not break, to screech out vociferations against Art and Thought, denouncing these as the accomplices of the momentary aberrations of him who erstwhile worshipped at their shrine.

Here in France at least, men knew better how to restrain themselves, and there were even a few courageous wielders of talented pens who did not hesitate to use their abilities in favour of their Anglo-Saxon colleague. Hugues Rebell published in the *Mercure de France* that *Défense d'Oscar Wilde*, the calm and tempered logic of which is still fresh to many minds. A number of writers and artists even held a meeting of protestation; but, of course, all this had not the slightest effect on the judicial position of Wilde. It was generally felt that the ferocious outcry raised against the unhappy man "who had been found out" was because that man was a poet, and not so much because he had gone counter to the manners of his time. Amongst all the mingled shouting and laughter, the arguments for and the arguments against, the voice of one man was heard stentorian and clear above all the rest, that voice belonged to Octave Mirbeau, a puissant master of the French tongue, and a brilliant writer and dramatist. The following lines of suppressed anger and large-minded charity emanated from his pen:

"*A great deal has been heard about the paradoxes of Oscar Wilde upon Art, Beauty, Conscience and Life! Paradoxes they were, it is true, and we know that some laid themselves open to the charge of exagger-*

ation, and vaulted over the threshold of the Forbidden. But after all, what is a paradox if not, for the most part of the time, the exaltation of an idea in a striking and superior form? As soon as an idea overleaps the low-level of ordinary popular understanding, having ceased to drag behind it the ignoble stumps gathered in the swamps of middle-class morality, and seeks with strong, steadfast wing, to attain the lofty heights of Philosophy, Literature or Art, we at once stigmatize it as a paradox, because, unable ourselves to follow it into those regions which are inaccessible to us, through the weakness of our organs, and we make haste to scotch it and put it under ban by flinging after it curse-laden cries of blame and contempt.

And yet, strange as it may seem, progress cannot be made save by way of paradox, whilst much vaunted common sense—the prized virtue of the imbecile—perpetuates the humdrum routine of daily life. The truth is, we refuse to allow anyone to come and outrage our intellectual sluggishness, or our morality, ready-made like second-hand clothes in a dealer's shop, or the stupid security of our sheepish preconceptions.

Looked at squarely, that was the veritable crime in the minds of those who sat in judgment on Oscar Wilde.

They could not forgive him for being a thinker, and

a man of superior intellect—and for that self-same reason eminently dangerous to other men. Wilde is young and has a future before him, and he has proved by the strong and charming works which he has already given us that he can still do much more in the cause of Beauty and Art. Must we not then admit that it is an abominable thing to risk the killing of something far above all laws, and all morality : the spirit of beauty, for the sake of repressing acts which are not really punishable per se.

For laws change and morality becomes transformed with the transformations of time, with the changeing of latitude and longitude, but beauty remains immaculate, and sheds her light far over the centuries that she alone can rescue from obscurity. "

With these magnificent words of one of the great masters of French prose, we would gladly terminate the present study ; but it remains for us to cite the following from the pen of our lately deceased friend, Hugues Rebell, who possessed not only acumen and erudition, but employed a brilliant style and ready wit in the expression of his thoughts :

" Will a day ever come, wrote he, when the deeds of men will be no more judged in the name of religion and morality, but from the point of view of their social importance ? When the misdemeanours

of a man of wit and of genius, or a clever, elegant man of fashion, shall no longer be judged by the same law as that which condemns a stolid navvy or a dockyard hand? Far from believing in our much belauded progress, I am inclined alas, to think that we are really far behind our foreſathers in tolerance, and above all in the ideas that govern our idea of social equality. The downfall of the sentiment of hierarchy seriously compromises the existence of some of the best men amongst us. It is not crime merely which is tracked and hounded down, but all that strays aside for a moment from every-day habits and customs. So-and-so, because he is not like other people inspires aversion, even horror on the part of those who take off their hats most respectfully to the successful swindler; and whilst the Police complacently allow the perpetration in our great cities of robberies and murders, they make a raid on the unfortunate bookseller who happens to have stowed away carefully in his back-shop, a few illustrations where the high deeds and gestures of Venus are too faitfully reproduced. These paltry persecutions would only serve to bring a smile to our lips were it not that everyone is more or less exposed to their arbitrary measures. Men are far less free to-day than they formerly were, because

they are too much dominated by a large number of ignorant and groundless prejudices. Ferocious gaolers fetter and imprison their minds for their greater overthrow; no longer do they believe in God, whilst giving implicit faith to vain Science which, making small account of the great diversity of character and temperament amongst human beings, holds up for unique example, a healthy and virtuous individual who never had any real existence except in the imagination of fools; and whilst no longer following any of the old religions, they submit themselves with equanimity to the condemnation of so-called Human Justice, which more often than not is radically venal, and impresses them far more than did in olden times, the ex-communicating *bulls* of Popes who had usurped the authority of God."

As for the sentence of hard labour passed upon Wilde, a description would fail to convey to the inexperienced reader a full idea of its barbarous severity. Sir Edward Clarke, the counsel for the defense, gave substantially the following reply to the representative of a Paris newspaper:

"My opinion is that Oscar Wilde will work out his sentence. He has received the heaviest punishment that it was possible to inflict upon him. You cannot possibly form any notion of the extreme

severity of " hard labour ", which is implacable in its *régime* of absorbing and exigent regularity.

" Oscar Wilde, who wore his hair long like the esthete he was, was obliged to undergo the indignity of having it cut close, and wearing the sackcloth suit bearing the broad-arrow mark of the convict. Thrust into a small narrow cell with only a bed, or rather a wooden plank in guise of a bed, for all his furniture,—a bed without a matress, and with a bolster made of wood, this talented man was made to pass the long weary months of his martyrdom.

" The " labour " given him to do was absolutely ridiculous for a man of his bent; first of all for a certain number of hours, he had to sit on a stool in his cell and disentangle and reduce to small quantities ship-rope of enormous size used for docking ocean liners, the only instruments allowed him to effect the work being a nail and his own fingers. The result of this painful and atrocious penitence was to tear and disfigure his hands beyond all hope.

After that he was conducted into a court where he had to displace a certain number of cannon-balls, carrying them from one place to another and arranging them in symmetrical piles. No sooner was this edifying labour terminated, than he had himself to

undo it all and carry back the cannon-balls one by one to the place from whence he had first taken them.

"Then finally, he was made to work the tread-mill which is a harder task than those even that we have endeavoured faintly to describe. Imagine if you can, an enormous wheel in the interior of which exist cunningly arranged winding steps. Wilde, mounting on one of the steps, would immediately set the wheel in motion by the movement of his feet; then the steps follow each other under the feet in rapid and regular evolution, thus forcing the legs to a precipitous action which becomes laborious, enervating, and even maddening after a few minutes. But this enervating fatigue and suffering the convict is obliged to overcome, whilst continuing to move his legs for all they are worth, if he would escape being knocked down, caught up and thrown over, by the revolving movement of the wheel. This fantastical exercise lasts a quarter of an hour, and the wretch obliged to indulge in it, is allowed five minutes rest before the silly game recommences.

"The convict is always kept apart and not allowed to speak even to his gaoler except at certain moments. All correspondence and reading is forbidden, save for the Bible and Prayer book placed at

the head of the wooden plank, which serves him for a bed; and relatives are not admitted to see him excepting at the end of the year.

" His food consists of meat and black bread, and of course only water is allowed. The meal-times take place at fixed hours, for naturally he has to follow a regular *régime,* in order to accomplish the hard labours that are incumbent upon him.

" Many of the convicts have been known to say, on coming out of prison, that they would have far more preferred to pass ten years in penal servitude than work out two years of hard labour. The moral suffering men like Oscar Wilde are forced to undergo is probably superior even to their physical distress, and I can only repeat that this labour is the severest which the laws of England impose. "

Wilde endured this martyrdom to the bitter end, the only favour allowed him being permission, towards the end of the time, to read a few books and to write. He read Dante in his entirety, dwelling longer over the poet's description of Hell than anything else, because here he recognized himself " at home ".

Before the doors of the gaol had been bolted on him, he wrote with a pen that had been dipped in

colourless ink, letters of tears, sobs and pains, which were issued to the world only after the unhappy man had winged his flight for another planet. Those letters bear every mark of the deepest sincerity. They are not so much literature as the wail of a broken heart, which had attached itself to the only human affection he believed was still faithful to him. It is impossible to treat lightly the passionate anguish which refrains from expressing itself with the same intensity as the sorrows it had suffered, stricken with infinite sadness at the utter shipwreck of all hope and the cowardice of the human nature that had brought him to such low estate.

That he should have conjured up the happy times he had seen decked out in all the charming graces of youth, and which smiled back his visage from the limpid mirror of his marvellously artistic intelligence, is only perfectly natural; and this evocation of happier times took on a new and horribly strange beauty, just as the feeblest ray of light stealing through prison walls gains in puissance from the sheer opacity of enveloping darkness.

I will not stop here to enquire whether he found later the consolation he so much desired, a haven of peace in the friendship of the aristocratic adolescent, who had unwittingly caused him to become cast-

a-way. It is highly probably that the bitter words which André Gide heard him utter, referred to that unfortunate intimacy : " No, he does not understand me ; he can no longer understand me. I repeat to him in each letter ; we can no more follow together the same path ; you have yours, and it is certainly beautiful ; and I have mine. His path is the path of Alcibiade, whilst mine henceforth must be that of St. Francis of Assisi. "

His last most important work in prose : *De Profundis,* which reveals him to us under an entirely different aspect, although, pratically always the same man, shows that he is still engrossed with the perpetual love of attitudinizing, dreaming perhaps, that in spite of his sorrow and repentance, he will be able to take up again and sing, although in an humbler tone, the pagan hymn that had been strangled in his throat. In this connection, we cannot help thinking of the gesture of the great Talma, who whilst he lay a-dying, although he knew it not, took the pendant skin of his thin neck, between his fingers, and said to those who stood around : " Here is something which would suit finely to make up a visage for an old Tiberius. "

It seems to us that the chief characteristic of Wilde's book is not so much its admirable accent as

its subtle irony, through which there seems to thrill the reply of Destiny to the haughty resolutions that he had undertaken. It is as though Death itself rose up from each page to sneer and chuckle at the master-singer; and few things are more bitter on the part of this poet—who had with his own hands ensepulchred himself as a willing holocaust to the deceitful gods of factitious Art,—than the constant appeals that he makes to Nature. The song no longer rings with the old regal note; there is none of the trepidating joy of a Whitman, or the yielding sweetness of an Emerson; our ear detects only the melopœia of a heart which had been wounded in its innermost recess.

"I tremble with pleasure when I think that on the very day of my leaving prison both the laburnum and the lilac will be blooming in the gardens, and that I shall see the wind stir into restless beauty the swaying gold of the one, and make the other toss the pale purple of its plumes so that all the air shall be Arabia for me." (1)

These are the words of a convalescent; of a man newly risen from a bed of sickness anticipating a richer and fuller life, unknowing that the uplifted hand of Death suspended just above him, was destined to strike him down at brief delay.

(1) De Profundis, 1905.

In the darkness of his prison cell, he dreams of the mysterious herbs that he will find in the realms of Nature ; of the balms that he shall ferret out amongst the plants of the earth, and which will bring peace for his anguish, and deep-seated joy for the suffering that racked his brain.

" But Nature, whose sweet rains fall on the unjust and just alike, will have clefts in the rocks where I may hide, and secret valleys in whose silence I may weep undisturbed. She will hang the night with stars so that I may walk abroad in the darkness without stumbling, and send the wind over my footprints so that none may track me to my hurt : she will cleanse me in great waters, and with bitter herbs make me whole. " (1)

In presence of this beautiful passage, it is painful to remember how his hopes were fated to be shattered by the cruellest of disappointments, and how he was doomed to die in the grey desolation of a poverty-haunted room.

Before drawing this notice to a close, it were not unfitting to recall another name, borne by a Poet of wayward genius, who likewise wandered astray in a forest of more than Dantean darkness, because the right way he had for ever lost from view. That Poet was a poet of France, and the voice of his

(1) De Profundis, 1905.

glory and the echo of the songs he chanted resounded with that proud and melodious note of genius which can never weary human ears. Although this poet led a life which can be compared only to the life of Oscar Wilde, he belonged to an order of mentality which differs too greatly in its essential features to allow the accidents of the career of the two men being used as a basis for comparing them closely together on the intellectual plane.

Verlaine belonged to that race of poets who distinguish themselves by their perfect spontaneity; he was a veritable poet of instinct, and had heard voices which no other mortal had heard before him on earth. In place of the metallic verses of his predecessors, the verses that for the most part are spoken by linguistic artists, he created a sort of ethereal music, a song so sweet and so penetrating that it haunts us eternally like the low, passionate, whisperings of a lover's voice. He gave us more than royal largesse of a wonderful and delicious soul, that had no part or lot in time, a music that was created for his soul alone; and we have willingly forgotten many a haughtier voice for the bewitching strains that this baptised faun played for us with such artless joy on his forest-grown reed.

The English poet was more complex and perhaps

less sheerly human ; and even his errors have no other origin than the perpetual effort to astonish us ; whilst above all, that which staggers us most and stirs us so profoundly is that these self-same errors, which had come into life under such innocent conditions, became terribly real in virtue of that imperious law which compels certain minds to render their dreams incarnate.

As for his work, however finely polished, however exquisite it may be and undoubtedly is, we have to confess that it has no power to move our souls into high passion and lofty endeavour ; although it might easily have sufficed to conquer celebrity for more than one ambitious literary craftsman. But we feel, with regard to Wilde, that we had a legitimate right to insist on the accomplishment of far greater things, a more sincere and genuine output, and are so much more dissatisfied because we clearly see the great discord betwen the man who palpitated with intense life, and the esthetic dandy whose cleverness overreached itself when he tried to work out that life on admittedly artificial lines.

This extraordinary divorce between intelligence and will-power was that which gave rise to the striking drama of Wilde's career ; albeit the word drama looks strange and out of place, if applied only to the

sorrow-filled period that crowned with thorns the latter end of his brilliant existence, if it be used for no other reason than to particularize the great catastrophe that took place in the sight of all the world. The fact is, the man's entire life was one perpetual drama. Throughout the whole course of his existence, he persistently sought after and that with impunity, all sorts of excitants that could at last no longer be disguised under the name of experiences—and no doubt, others more terrible still that fall under no human laws, would have come finally to swell the ranks of their forerunners—and then, had the hand of Destiny not arrested him in his course, he would have wound up by descending so low that the artistic life of his soul would have been forever extinguished.

That, when all is said and done, would have been the veritable, the irremediable tragedy.

Fortunately, royal intellects such as these, can never utterly die, and therein consists their greatest chastisement. Spasmodic movements agitate them, revealing beneath their mendacious laughter the secret agony of their souls; and we are suddenly called upon to witness the heart-rending spectacle of the slow death-agony of a haughty, talented poet, a Petronius self-poisoned through fear of Cæsar or

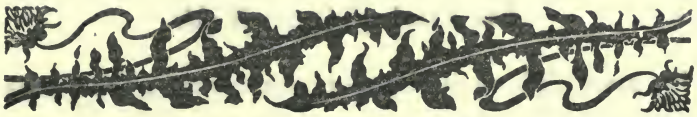
a Wilde whom a vicious and over-wrought Public had only half assassinated, raising his poor, glazed eyes towards the marvellous Light of Truth, whose glorious vision, we know by the sure voice that comes "from the depths," he had caught at last.....

Oscar Wilde had desired to live a pagan's free and untramelled life in Twentieth-century England, forgetful of the enormous fact that no longer may we live pagan-wise, for the shadow of the Cross has shed a steadily increasing gloom over the conditions that enlivened the joyous existence of olden-times.

C. G.

The Trial of Oscar Wilde.

" In all men's hearts a slumbering swine lies low ", says the French poet; so come ye, whose porcine instincts have never been awakened, or if rampant successfully hidden, and hurl the biggest, sharpest stones you can lay your hands on at your wretched, degraded, humiliated brother, *who has been found out.*



The Trial of Oscar Wilde

The life and death of Oscar Wilde, poet, playwright, *poseur* and convict, can only fittingly be summarised as a tragedy. Every misspent life is a tragedy more or less; but how much more tragic appear the elements of despair and disaster when the victim to his own vices is a man of genius exercising a considerable influence upon the thought and culture of his day, and possessing every advantage which birth, education, talent and station can bestow? Oscar Wilde was more than a clever and original thinker. He was the inventor of a certain literary style, and, though his methods, showy and eccentric as they were, lent themselves readily to imitation, none of his followers could approach their "Master" in the particular mode which he had made

his own. There can be two opinions as to the merits of his plays. There can be only one judgment as to their daring and audacious originality. Of the ordinary and the commonplace Wilde had a horror. which with him was almost a religion, He was unmercifully chaffed throughout America when he appeared in public in a light green suit adorned with a large sunflower; but he did not don this outrageous costume because he preferred such startling clothing. He adopted the dress in order to be original and assumed it because no other living man was likely to be so garbed. He was consumed, in fact, with overpowering vanity. He was possessed of a veritable demon of self-esteem. He ate strange foods, and drank unusual liquors in order to be unlike any of his contemporaries. His eccentricities of dress continued to the end. On the first night of one of his plays—it was a brilliant triumph—he was called upon by an enthusiastic audience for the customary speech. He was much exercised in his mind as to what he could say that would be unconventional and sensational. No mere platitudes or banalities for the author of "Lady Windermere's Fan," who made a god of the spirit of Epigram and almost canonized the art of Repartee. He said, "Ladies and Gentlemen: I am glad you

like my play. I like it very much myself too," which, if candid, was hardly the remark of a modest and retiring author. The leopard cannot change his spots and neither can the lion his skin. Even in his beautiful book, "De Profundis"—surely the most extraordinary volume of recent years—the man's character is writ so plainly that he who runs may read. Man of letters, man of fashion, man of hideous vices, Oscar Wilde remained to the last moment of his murdered life, a self-conscious egotist. "Gentlemen," he gasped on his death-bed, hearing the doctors express misgivings as to their fees, "it would appear that I am dying beyond my means!" It was a brilliant sally and one can picture the startled faces of the medical attendants. A genius lay a-dying and a genius he remained till the breath of life departed.

Genius we know to be closely allied to insanity and it were charitable to describe this man as mad, besides approaching very nearly to the truth. Something was out of gear in that finely attuned mind. Some thorn there was among the intellectual roses which made him what he was. He pined for strange passions, new sensations. His was the temperament of the Roman sybarite. He often sighed for a return of the days when vice was deified. He spoke

of the glories of the Devastation, the awful woman and the Alexandrian school at which little girls and young boys were instructed in all the most secret and unthinkable forms of vice. Modern women satisfied him not. Perverted passions consumed the fire of his being. He had had children of his wife, but sexual intercourse between him and that most unfortunate lady was more honoured in the breach than in the observance. They had their several rooms. On many occasions Wilde actually brought the companions of his abominable rites and sinful joys to his own home, and indulged in his frightful propensities beneath the roof of the house which sheltered his own sons and their most unhappy mother. Could the man capable of this atrocity possess a normal mind? Can Oscar Wilde, who committed moral suicide and made of himself a social pariah, be regarded as a sane man? London society is not so strict nor straight-laced that it will not forgive much laxity in its devoted votaries. Rumour had been busy with the name of Oscar Wilde for a long time before the whole awful truth became known. He was seen, constantly, at theatres and restaurants with persons in no way fit to be his associates and these persons were not girls or women. He paraded his shameful friendships

and flaunted his villainous companions in society's face. People began to look askance at the famous wit. Doors began to be closed to him. He was ostracised by all but the most Bohemian coteries. But even those who were still proud to rank him among their friends did not know how far he had wilfully drawn himself into the web of disgrace. Much that seemed strange and unaccountable was attributed to his well-known love of pose. Men shrugged their shoulders and declared that "Wilde meant no harm. It was his vainglorious way of showing his contempt for the opinion of the world. Men of such parts could not be judged by ordinary standards. Intellectually Wilde was fit to mix with the immortals. If he preferred the society of miserable, beardless, stunted youths destitute alike of decency or honour—it was no affair of theirs," and so on *ad nauseam*. Meanwhile, heedless of the warnings of friends and the sneers of foes, Wilde went his own way—to destruction.

He was addicted to the vice and crime of sodomy long before he formed a "friendship" which was destined to involve him in irretrievable ruin. In London, he met a younger son of the eccentric Marquis of Queensbury, Lord Alfred Douglas by name. This youth was being educated at Cam-

bridge. He was of peculiar temperament and talented in a strong, frothy style. He was good-looking in an effeminate, lady-like way. He wrote verse. His poems not being of a manner which could be acceptable to a self-respecting publication, his efforts appeared in an eccentric and erratic magazine which was called "The Chameleon." In this precious serial appeared a "poem" from the pen of Lord Alfred dedicated to his father in these filial words: "To the Man I Hate."

Oscar Wilde at once developed an extraordinary and dangerous interest in this immature literary egg. A being of his own stamp, after his own heart, was Lord Alfred Douglas. The love of women delighted him not. The possession of a young girl's person had no charm for him. He yearned for higher flights in the realms of love! He sought unnatural affection. Wilde, experienced in all the symptoms of a disordered sexual fancy, contrived to exercise a remarkable and sinister influence over this youth. Again and again and again did his father implore Lord Alfred Douglas to separate himself from the tempter. Lord Queensberry threatened, persuaded, bribed, urged, cajoled: all to no purpose. Wilde and his son were constantly together. The nature of their friendship became the talk of the

town. It was proclaimed from the housetops. The Marquis, determined to rescue him if it were humanly possible, horsewhipped his son in a public thoroughfare and was threatened with a summons for assault. On one occasion—it was the opening night of one of the Wilde plays—he sent the author a bouquet of choice — vegetables! Three or four times he wrote to him begging him to cancel his friendship with Lord Alfred. Once he called at the house in Tite Street and there was a terrible scene. The Marquis fumed; Wilde laughed. He assured his Lordship that only at his son's own request would he break off the association which existed between them. The Marquis, driven to desperation, called Wilde a disgusting name. The latter, with a show of wrath, ordered the peer from his door and he was obliged to leave.

At all costs and hazards, at the risk of any pain and grief to himself, Lord Queensberry was determined to break off the disgraceful *liaison*. He stopped his son's allowance, but Wilde had, at that time, plenty of money and his purse was his friend's. At last the father went to the length of leaving an insulting message for Oscar Wilde at that gentleman's club. He called there and asked for Wilde. The clerk at the enquiry office stated that Mr. Wilde was

not on the premises. The Marquis then produced a card and wrote upon it in pencil these words, "Oscar Wilde is a Bugger." This elegant missive he directed to be handed to the author when he should next appear at the club.

From this card—Lord Queensberry's last resource—grew the whole great case, which amazed and horrified the world in 1895. Oscar Wilde was compelled, however reluctantly, to take the matter up. Had he remained quiescent under such a public affront, his career in England would have been at an end. He bowed to the inevitable and a libel action was prepared.

One is often compelled to wonder if he foresaw the outcome. One asks oneself if he realized what defeat in this case would portend. The stakes were desperately high. He risked, in a Court of Law, his reputation, his position, his career and even his freedom. Did he know what the end to it all would be?

Whatever Wilde's fears and expectations were, his opponent did not under-estimate the importance of the issue. If he could not induce a jury of twelve of his fellow-countrymen to believe that the plaintiff was what he had termed him, he, the Marquis of Queensberry, would be himself dis-

graced. Furthermore, there would, in the event of failure, be heavy damages to pay and the poor man was not over rich. Wilde had many and powerful friends. For reasons which it is not necessary to enlarge upon, Lord Queensberry was not liked or respected by his own order. The ultimate knowledge that he was a father striving to save a loved son from infamy changed all that, and his Lordship met with nothing but sympathy from the general public in the latter stages of the great case.

Sir Edward Clarke was retained for the plaintiff. It is needless to refer to the high estimation in which this legal and political luminary is held by all classes of society. From first to last he devoted himself to the lost cause of Oscar Wilde with a whole-hearted devotion which was beyond praise. The upshot of the libel action must have pained and disgusted him ; yet he refused to abandon his client, and, in the two criminal trials, defended him with a splendid loyalty and with the marked ability that might be expected from such a counsel. The acute, energetic, silver-spoken Mr. Carson led on the other side. It is not necessary to make more than passing mention of the conspicuous skill with which the able lawyer conducted the case for the defen-

dant. Even the gifted plaintiff himself cut a sorry figure when opposed to Mr. Carson.

Extraordinary interest was displayed in the action; and the courts were besieged on each day that the trial lasted. Remarkable revelations were expected and they were indeed forthcoming. Enormous pains had been taken to provide a strong defence and it was quite clear almost after the first day that Wilde's case would infallibly break down. He made some astonishing admissions in the witness-box and even disgusted many of his friends by the flippancy and affected unconcern of his replies to questions of the most damaging nature. He, apparently, saw nothing indecorous in facts which must shock any other than the most depraved. He saw nothing disgusting in friendships of a kind to which only one construction could be put. He gave expensive dinners to ex-barmen and the like : ignorant, brutish young fools—because they amused him ! He presented youths of questionable moral character with silver cigarette-cases because their society was pleasant ! He took young men to share his bedroom at hotels and saw nothing remarkable in such proceedings. He gave sums of thirty pounds to ill-bred youths--accomplished blackmailers—because they were hard-up and he felt they

did not deserve poverty! He assisted other young men of a character equally undesirable, to go to America and received letters from them in which they addressed him as "Dear Oscar," and sent him their love. In short, his own statements damned him. Out of his own mouth—and he posing all the time—was he convicted. The case could have but one ending. Sir Edward Clarke—pained, surprised, shocked—consented to a verdict for the Marquis of Queensberry and the great libel case was at an end. The defendant left the court proudly erect, conscious that he had been the means of saving his son and of eradicating from society a canker which had been rotting it unnoticed, except by a few, for a very long time. Oscar Wilde left the court a ruined and despised man. People—there were one or two left who were loyal to him—turned aside from him with loathing. He had nodded to six or seven friends in court on the last day of the trial and turned ashen pale when he observed their averted looks. All was over for him. The little supper-parties with a few choice wits; the glorious intoxication of first-night applause; the orgies in the infamous dens of his boon companions—all these were no more for him. Oscar Wilde, *bon vivant*, man of letters, arbiter

of literary fashion, stood at the bar of public opinion, a wretch guilty of crimes against which the body recoils and the mind revolts. Oh ! what a falling-off was there !

If any reader would care to know the impression made upon the opinion of the London world by the revelations of this lawsuit, let him turn to the "Daily Telegraph" of the morning following the dramatic result of the trial. In that great newspaper appeared a leading article in reference to Oscar Wilde, the terms of which, though deserved, were most scathing, denunciatory, and bitter. Yet a general feeling of relief permeated the regret which was universally expressed at so terrible a termination of a distinguished career. Society was at no pains to hide its relief that the Augean stable has been cleansed and that a terrible scandal had been exorcised from its midst.

It now becomes a necessary, albeit painful task, to describe the happenings incidental or subsequent to the Wilde & Queensberry proceedings. It was certain that matters could not be allowed to rest as they were. A jury in a public court had convinced themselves that Lord Queensberry's allegations were strictly true and the duty of the Public Prosecutor

was truly clear. The law is not, or should not be, a respector of persons, and Oscar Wilde, genius though he were, was not less amenable to the law than would be any ignorant boor suspected of similar crimes. The machinery of legal process was set in action and the arrest of Wilde followed as a matter of course.

A prominent name in the libel action against Lord Queensberry had been that of one Alfred Taylor. This individual, besides being himself guilty of the most infamous practices, had, it would appear, for long acted as a sort of precursor for the Apostle of Culture and his capture took place at nearly the same time as that of his principal. The latter was arrested at a certain quiet and fashionable hotel whither he had gone with one or two yet loyal friends after the trial for libel. His arrest was not unexpected, of course; but it created a tremendous sensation and vast crowds collected at Bow Street Police Station and in the vicinity during the preliminary examinations before the Magistrate. The prisoner Wilde bore himself with some show of fortitude, but it was clear that the iron had already entered into his soul and his old air of jaunty indifference to the opinion of the world had plainly given way to a mental anxiety which could not alto-

gether be hidden, though it could be controlled. On one occasion as, fur-coated, silk-hatted, he entered the dock, he nodded familiarly to the late Sir Augustus Harris, but that magnate of the theatrical world deliberately turned his back upon the playwriting celebrity. The evidence from first to last was followed with the most intense interest and the end of it was that Oscar Wilde was fully committed for trial.

The case came on at the Old Bailey during the month of April, 1895, and it was seen that the interest had in no wise abated. Mr. Justice Charles presided and he was accompanied by the customary retinue of Corporation dignitaries. The court was crowded in every part and hundreds of people were unsuccessful in efforts to obtain admission. A reporter for a Sunday newspaper wrote: "Wilde's personal appearance has changed little since his committal from Bow Street. He wears the same clothes and continues to carry the same hat. He looks haggard and worn, and his long hair that was so carefully arranged when last he was in the court, though not then in the dock, is now dishevelled. Taylor, on the other hand, still neatly dressed, appears not to have suffered from his enforced confinement. But he no longer attempts to regard

the proceedings with that indifference which he affected when first before the magistrate."

As soon as Wilde and his confederate took their places in the dock, each held a whispered consultation with his counsel and the Clerk of Arraigns then read over the indictments. Both prisoners pleaded "Not guilty," Taylor speaking in a loud and confident tone. Wilde spoke quietly, looked very grave and gave attentive heed to the formal opening proceedings.

Mr. C. F. Gill led for the prosecution and he rose amidst a breathless silence, to outline the main facts of the case. After begging the jury to dismiss from their minds anything that they might have heard or read in regard to the affair, and to abandon all prejudice on either side, he described at some length the circumstances which led up to the present prosecution. He spoke of the arrest and committal of the Marquis of Queensberry on a charge of criminal libel and of the collapse of the case for the prosecution when the case was heard at the old Bailey. He alluded to the subsequent inevitable arrest of Wilde and Taylor and of the committal of both prisoners to take their trial at the present Sessions.

Wilde, he said, was well-known as a dramatic

author and generally, as a literary man of unusual attainments. He had resided, until his arrest, at a house in Tite Street, Chelsea, where his wife lived with the children of the marriage. Taylor had had numerous addresses, but for the time covered by these charges, had dwelt in Little College Street, and afterwards in Chapel Street. Although Wilde had a house in Tite Street, he had at different times occupied rooms in St. James's Place, the Savoy Hotel and the Albermarle Hotel. It would be shown that Wilde and Taylor were in league for certain purposes and Mr. Gill then explained the specific allegations against the prisoners. Wilde, he asserted, had not hesitated, soon after his first introduction to Taylor, to explain to him to what purpose he wished to put their acquaintance. Taylor was familiar with a number of young men who were in the habit of giving their bodies, or selling them, to other men for the purpose of sodomy. It appeared that there was a number of youths engaged in this abominable traffic and that one and all of them were known to Taylor, who went about and sought out for them men of means who were willing to pay heavily for the indulgence of their favorite vice. Mr. Gill endeavoured to show that Taylor himself was given to sodomy and that he had himself

indulged in these filthy practices with the same youths as he agreed to procure for Wilde. The visits of the latter to Taylor's rooms were touched upon and the circumstances attending these visits were laid bare. On nearly every occasion when Wilde called, a young man was present with whom he committed the act of sodomy. The names of various young men connected with these facts were mentioned in turn and the case of the two Parkers was given as a sample of many others on which the learned counsel preferred to dwell with less minuteness.

When Taylor gave up his rooms in Little College Street and took up his abode in Chapel Street, he left behind him a number of compromising papers, which would be produced in evidence against the prisoners; and he should submit in due course that there was abundant corroboration of the statements of the youths involved. Mr. Gill pointed out the peculiarities in the case of Frederick Atkins. This youth had accompanied the prisoner Wilde to Paris, and there could be no doubt whatever that the latter had in the most systematic way endeavoured to influence this young man's mind towards vicious courses and had endeavoured to mould him to his own depraved will. The relations which had

existed between the prisoner and another lad, one Alfred Wood, were also fully described and the learned counsel made special allusion to the remarkable manner in which Wilde had lavished money upon Wood prior to the departure of that youth for America.

Mr. Gill referred to yet another of Wilde's youthful familiars—namely : Sidney Mavor—in regard to whom, he said, the jury must form their own conclusions after they had heard the evidence. A mong other things to which he would ask them to direct careful attention was a letter written in pencil by Taylor, the prisoner, to this youth. The communication ran : " Dear Sid, I cannot wait any longer. Come at once and see Oscar at Tite Street. I am, Yours ever, Alfred Taylor." The use of the christian name of Wilde in so familiar a way suggested the nature of the acquaintance which existed between Mavor and Wilde, who was old enough to be his father. In conclusion, Mr. Gill asked the jury to give the case, painful as it must necessarily be, their most earnest and careful consideration.

Both Wilde and Taylor paid keen attention to the opening statement. They exchanged no word together and it was observed that Wilde kept as far

apart from his companion in the dock, as he possibly could.

The first witness called was Charles Parker. He proved to be a rather smartly-attired youth, fresh-coloured, and of course, clean-shaven. He was very pale and appeared uneasy. He stated that he had first met Taylor at the St. James' Restaurant. The latter had got into conversation with him and the young fellows with him, and had insisted on "standing" drinks. Conversation of a certain nature passed between them. Taylor called attention to the prostitutes who frequent Piccadilly Circus and remarked: "I can't understand sensible men wasting their money on painted trash like that. Many do, though. But there are a few who know better. Now, you could get money in a certain way easily enough, if you cared to." The witness had formerly been a valet and he was at this time out of employment. He understood to what Taylor alluded and made a coarse reply.

Mr. Gill. — "I am obliged to ask you what it was you actually said."

Witness. — "I do not like to say."

Mr. Gill. — "You were less squeamish at the time, I daresay. I ask you for the words."

Witness. — "I said that if any old gentleman

with money took a fancy to me, I was agreeable. I was terribly hard up."

Mr. GILL. — "What did Taylor say?"

WITNESS. — "He laughed and said that men far cleverer, richer and better than I preferred things of that kind."

Mr. GILL. — "Did Taylor mention the prisoner Wilde?"

WITNESS. — "Not at that time. He arranged to meet me again and I consented.

Mr. GILL. — "Where did you first meet Wilde?"

WITNESS — "At the Solferino Restaurant."

Mr. GILL. — "Tell me what transpired."

WITNESS. — "Taylor said he could introduce me to a man who was good for plenty of money. Wilde came in later and I was formally introduced. Dinner was served for four in a private room."

Mr. GILL. — "Who made the fourth?"

WITNESS. — "My brother, William Parker. I had promised Taylor that he should accompany me."

Mr. GILL. — "What happened during dinner?"

WITNESS. — "There was plenty of champagne and brandy and coffee. We all partook of it."

Mr. GILL. — " Of what nature was the conversation? "

WITNESS. — " General, at first. Nothing was then said as to the purposes for which we had come together. "

Mr. GILL. — " And then? "

WITNESS. — " Wilde invited me to go to his rooms at the Savoy Hotel. Only he and I went, leaving my brother and Taylor behind. Wilde and I went in a cab. At the Savoy we went to his —Wilde's— sitting-room. "

Mr. GILL. — " More drink was offered you there? "

WITNESS. — " Yes; we had liqueurs. "

Mr. GILL. — " Let us know what occurred. "

WITNESS. — " He committed the act of sodomy upon me. "

Mr. GILL. — " With your consent? "

The witness did not reply. Further examined, he said that Wilde on that occasion had given him two pounds and asked him to call upon him again a week later. He did so, the same thing occurred and Wilde then gave him three pounds. The witness next described a visit to Little College Street, to Taylor's rooms. Wilde used to call there and the same thing occurred as at the Savoy. For a fort-

night or three weeks the witness lodged in Park-Walk, close to Taylor's house. There too he was visited by Wilde. The witness gave a detailed account of the disgusting proceedings there. He said, " I was asked by Wilde to imagine that I was a woman and that he was my lover. I had to keep up this illusion. I used to sit on his knees and he used to play with my privates as a man might amuse himself with a girl. " Wilde insisted in this filthy make-believe being kept up. Wilde gave him a silver cigarette case and a gold ring, both of which articles he pawned. The prisoner said, " I don't suppose boys are different to girls in acquiring presents from them who are fond of them. " He remembered Wilde having rooms at St. James's Place and the witness visited him there.

Mr. Gill. — " Where else have you been with Wilde ? "

Witness. — " To Kettner's Restaurant. "

Mr. Gill. — " What happened there ? "

Witness. — " We dined there. We always had a lot of wine. Wilde would talk of poetry and art during dinner, and of the old Roman days. "

Mr. Gill. — " On one occasion you proceeded from Kettner's to Wilde's house ? "

Witness. — " Yes. We went to Tite Street.

It was very late at night. Wilde let himself and me in with a latchkey. I remained the night, sleeping with the prisoner, and he himself let me out in the early morning before anyone was about. "

Mr. Gill. — " Where else have you visited this man ? "

Witness. — " At the Albemarle Hotel. The same thing happened then. "

Mr. Gill. — " Where did your last interview take place ? "

Witness. — " I last saw Wilde in Trafalgar Square about nine months ago. He was in a hansom and saw me. He alighted from the hansom. "

Mr. Gill. — What did he say ?"

Witness. — " He said, ' Well, you are looking as pretty as ever. ' He did not ask me to go anywhere with him then. "

The witness went on to say that during the period of his acquaintance with Wilde, he frequently saw Taylor, and the latter quite understood and was aware of the motive of the acquaintance. At the Little College Street rooms he had frequently seen Wood, Atkins and Scaife, and he knew that these youths were " in the same line, at the same game, " as himself. In the August previous to this

trial he was at a certain house in Fitzroy Square. Orgies of the most disgraceful kind used to happen there. The police made a raid upon the premises and he and the Taylors were arrested. From that time he had ceased all relationship with the latter. Since that event he had enlisted, and while away in the country he was seen by someone representing Lord Queensberry and made a statement. The evidence of this witness created a great sensation in court, and it was increased when Sir Edward Clarke rose to cross-examine. This began after the adjournment.

Sir Edward Clarke. — "When were you seen in the country in reference to this case?"

Witness. — "Towards the end of March."

Sir Edward. — "Who saw you?"

Witness. — "Mr. Russell."

Sir Edward. — "Was there no examination before that?"

Witness. — "No."

Sir Edward. — "Did you state at Bow Street that you received £30 not to say anything about a certain case?"

Witness. — "Yes."

Sir Edward. — "Now, I do not ask you to give me the name of the gentleman from whom this

money was extorted, but I ask you to give me the name of the agents."

WITNESS. — "Wood & Allen."

Sir EDWARD. — "Where were you living then?"

WITNESS. — "In Cranford Street."

Sir EDWARD. — "When did the incident occur in consequence of which you received that £30?"

WITNESS. — "About two weeks before."

Sir EDWARD. — "Where?"

WITNESS. — "At Camera Square."

Sir EDWARD. — "I'll leave that question. You say positively that Mr. Wilde committed sodomy with you at the Savoy?"

WITNESS. — "Yes."

Sir EDWARD. — "But you have been in the habit of accusing other gentlemen of the same offence?"

WITNESS. — "Never, unless it has been done."

Sir EDWARD. — "I submit that you blackmail gentlemen?"

WITNESS. — "No, Sir, I have accepted money, but it has been offered to me to pay me for the offence. I have been solicited. I have never suggested this offence to gentlemen."

Sir EDWARD. — " Was the door locked during the time you describe ? "

WITNESS. — " I do not think so. It was late and the prisoner told the waiter not to come up again. "

The next witness was William Parker. This youth corroborated his brother's evidence. He said he was present at the dinner with Taylor and Wilde described by the last witness. Wilde paid all his attention to his—witness's—brother. He, Wilde, often fed his brother off his own fork or out of his own spoon. His brother accepted a preserved cherry from Wilde's own mouth—he took it into his and this trick was repeated three or four times. His brother went off with the prisoner to his rooms at the Savoy and the witness remained behind with Taylor, who said, " Your brother is lucky. Oscar does not care what he pays if he fancies a chap. "

Ellen Grant was the landlady of the house in Little College Street at which Taylor lodged. She gave evidence as to the visits of various lords and stated that Wilde was a fairly frequent caller. He would remain for hours and one of the lads was generally closeted with him. Once she tried the door and found it locked. She heard whispering and laughing and her suspicions were aroused though she did not like to take steps in the matert.

Lucy Rumsby, who let a room to Charles Parker at Chelsea, gave rather similar evidence, but Wilde does not appear to have called there more than once and that occasion it was to take out Parker, who went away with him.

Sophia Gray, Taylor's landlady in Chapel Street, also gave evidence. She amused the court by the emphatic and outspoken way in which she explained that she had no idea of the nature of what was going on. Several young men were constantly calling upon Taylor and were alone with him for a long time, but he used to say that they were clerks for whom he hoped to find employment. The prisoner Wilde was a frequent visitor.

But all this latter evidence paled as regards sinister significance beside that furnished by a young man named Alfred Wood. This young wretch admitted to acts of the grossest indecency with Oscar Wilde. He said, "Wilde saw his influence to induce me to consent. He made me nearly drunk. He used to put his hand inside my trousers beneath the table at dinner and compel me to do the same to him. Afterwards, I used to lie on a sofa with him. It was a long time, however, before I would allow him to actually do the act of sodomy. He gave me money to go to America.

Sir Edward Clarke submitted this self-disgraced witness to a very vigorous cross-examination.

Sir EDWARD. — "What have you been doing since your return from America?"

WITNESS. — "Well, I have not done much."

Sir EDWARD. — "Have you done anything?"

WITNESS. — "I have had no regular employment."

Sir EDWARD. — "I thought not."

WITNESS. — "I could not get anything to do."

Sir EDWARD. — "As a matter of fact, you have had no respectable work for over three years?"

WITNESS. — "Well, no."

Sir EDWARD. — "Did not you, in conjunction with Allen, succeed in getting £300 from a gentleman?"

WITNESS. — "Yes; but he was guilty with Allen."

Sir EDWARD. — "How much did you receive?"

WITNESS. — "I advised Allen how to proceed. He gave me £130."

Sir EDWARD. — "Who else got any of this money?"

WITNESS. — "Parker. Charles Parker got some and also Wood."

Thos. Price was the next witness. This man was a waiter at a private hotel in St. James's and he

testified to Wilde's visits there and to the number of young men; "of quite inferior station," who called to see him. Then came Frank Atkins, whose evidence is given in full.

Mr. Avory. — "How old are you?"

Witness. — "I am 20 years old."

Mr. Avory. — "What is your business?"

Witness. — "I have been a billiard-marker."

Mr. Avory. — "You are doing nothing now?"

Witness. — "No."

Mr. Avory. — "Who introduced you to Wilde?"

Witness. — "I was introduced to him by Schwabe in November, 1892."

Mr. Avory. — "Have you met Lord Alfred Douglas?"

Witness. — "I have. I dined with him and Wilde on several occasions. They pressed me to go to Paris."

Mr. Avory. — "You went with them?"

Witness. — "Yes."

Mr. Avory. — "You told Wilde on one occasion while in Paris that you had spent the previous night with a woman?"

Witness. — "No. I had arranged to meet a girl at the Moulin Rouge, and Wilde told me not to

go. However, I did go, but the woman was not there."

Mr. Avory. — "You returned to London with Wilde?"

Witness. — "Yes."

Mr. Avory. — "Did he give you money?"

Witness. — "He gave me a cigarette-case."

Mr. Avory. — "You were then the best of friends?"

Witness. — "He called me Fred and I addressed him as Oscar. We liked each other, but there was no harm in it."

Mr. Avory. — "Did you visit Wilde on your return?"

Witness. — "Yes, at Tite Street. Wilde also called upon me at Osnaburgh Street. On the latter occasion one of the Parkers was present."

Mr. Avory. — "You know most of these youths. Do you know Sidney Mavor?"

Witness. — "Only by sight."

Sir Edward Clarke. — "Were you ill at Osnaburgh Street?"

Witness. — "Yes, I had small-pox and was removed to the hospital ship. Before I went I wrote to Parker asking him to write to Wilde and request him to come and see me, and he did so."

Sir EDWARD. — "You are sure you returned from Paris with Mr. Wilde?"

WITNESS. — "Yes."

Sir EDWARD. — "Did any impropriety ever take place between you and Wilde?"

WITNESS. — "Never."

Sir EDWARD. — "Have you ever lived with a man named Burton?"

WITNESS. — "Yes."

Sir EDWARD. — "What was he?"

WITNESS. — "A bookmaker."

Sir EDWARD. — "Have you and this Burton been engaged in the business of blackmailing?"

WITNESS. — "I have a professional name. I have sometimes called myself Denny."

Sir EDWARD. — "Has this man Burton, to your knowledge, obtained money from gentlemen by accusing them or threatening to accuse them of certain offences?"

WITNESS. — "Not to my knowledge."

Sir EDWARD. — "Not in respect to a certain Birmingham gentleman?"

WITNESS. — "No."

Sir EDWARD. — "That being your answer, I must particularize. On June 9th, 1891, did you and

Burton obtain a large sum of money from a Birmingham gentleman?"

WITNESS. — "Certainly not."

Sir EDWARD. — "Then I ask you if in June, '91, Burton did not take rooms for you in Tatchbrook Street?"

WITNESS. — "Yes; and he lived with me there."

Sir EDWARD. — "You were in the habit of taking men home with you then?"

WITNESS. — "Not for the purposes of blackmail."

Sir EDWARD. — "Well, for indecent purposes."

WITNESS. — "No."

Sir EDWARD. — "Give me the names of two or three of the people whom you have taken home to that address?"

WITNESS. — "I cannot. I forget them."

Sir EDWARD. — "Now I am going to ask you a direct question, and I ask you to be careful in your reply. Were you and Burton ever taken to Rochester Road Police Station?"

WITNESS. — "No."

Sir EDWARD. — "Well, was Burton?"

WITNESS. — "I think not—at least, he was not, to my knowledge."

Sir EDWARD. — "Did the Birmingham gentleman

give to Burton a cheque for £200 drawn in the name of S. Denis or Denny, your own name?"

WITNESS. — "Not to my knowledge."

Sir EDWARD. — "About two years ago, did you and someone else go to the Victoria Hotel with two American gentlemen?"

WITNESS. — "No, I did not. Never."

Sir EDWARD. — "I think you did. Be careful in your replies. Did Burton extort money from these gentlemen?"

WITNESS. — "I have never been there at all."

Sir EDWARD. — "Have you ever been to Anderton's Hotel and stayed a night with a gentleman, whom you threatened the next morning with exposure?"

WITNESS. — "I have not."

Sir EDWARD. — "When did you go abroad with Burton?"

WITNESS. — "I think in February, 1892."

Sir EDWARD. — "When did you last go with him abroad?"

WITNESS. — "Last spring."

Sir EDWARD. — "How long were you away?"

WITNESS. — "Oh! about a month."

Sir EDWARD. — "Where did you stay?"

WITNESS. — "We went to Nice and stayed at Gaze's Hotel."

Sir EDWARD. — "You were having a holiday?"

WITNESS. — "Yes."

Sir EDWARD. — "Which you continued with business in your usual way?"

The witness did not reply.

Sir EDWARD. — "What were you and Burton doing at Nice?"

WITNESS. — "Simply enjoying ourselves."

Sir EDWARD. — "During this visit of enjoyment you and Burton fell out, I think."

WITNESS. — "Oh, dear, no!"

Sir EDWARD. — "Yet you separated from this Burton after that visit?"

WITNESS. — "I gave up being a bookmaker's clerk."

Sir EDWARD. — "What name did Burton use in the ring?"

WITNESS. — "Watson was his betting name."

Sir EDWARD. — "Did you blackmail a gentleman at Nice?"

WITNESS. — "No."

Sir EDWARD. — "Are you sure there was no quarrel between you and Burton at Nice?"

WITNESS. — "There may have been a little one, but I don't remember anything of the kind."

Mr. Grain then put some questions to the Witness.

Mr. GRAIN. — "Did you go to Scarbro' about a year ago?"

WITNESS. — "Yes."

Mr. GRAIN. — "Did Burton go with you?"

WITNESS. — "Yes."

Mr. GRAIN. — "What was your business there?"

WITNESS. — "I was engaged professionally. I sang at the Aquarium there."

Mr. GRAIN. — "Did you get acquainted while there with a foreign gentleman, a Count?"

WITNESS. — "Not acquainted."

At this moment Mr. Grain wrote a name on a piece of paper and handed it up to the witness, who read it.

Mr. GRAIN. — "Do you know that gentleman?"

WITNESS. — "No, I heard his name mentioned at Scarborough."

Mr. GRAIN. — "Then you never spoke to him?"

WITNESS. — "No."

Mr. GRAIN. — "Was not a large sum—about £500—paid to you or Burton by that gentleman about this time last year?"

WITNESS. — "No."

Mr. GRAIN. — "Had you any engagement at the Scarborough Aquarium?"

WITNESS. — "Yes."

Mr. GRAIN. — "How much did you receive a week?"

WITNESS. — "I was paid four pounds ten shillings."

Mr. GRAIN. — "How long were you there?"

WITNESS. — "Three weeks."

Mr. GRAIN. — "Have you ever lived in Buckingham Palace Road?"

WITNESS. — "I have."

Mr. Grain wrote at this stage on another slip of paper and it was handed up to the witness-box.

Mr. GRAIN. — "Look at that piece of paper. Do you know the name written there?"

WITNESS. — "I never saw it before."

Mr. GRAIN. — "When were you living in Buckingham Palace Road?"

WITNESS. — "In 1892."

Mr. GRAIN. — "Do you remember being introduced to an elderly man in the City?"

WITNESS. — "No."

Mr. GRAIN. — "Did you take him to your room, permit him to commit sodomy with and upon you,

rob him of his pocket-book and threaten him with exposure if he complained?"

WITNESS. — "No."

Mr. GRAIN. — "Did you threaten to extort money from him because he had agreed to accompany you home for a foul purpose?"

WITNESS. — "No."

Mr. GRAIN. — "Did you ever stay at a place in the suburbs on the South Western Railway with Burton?"

WITNESS. — "No."

Mr. GRAIN. — "What other addresses have you had in London during the last three years?"

WITNESS. — "None but those I have told you."

This concluded the evidence of this witness for the time being.

Mary Applegate, employed as a housekeeper at Osnaburgh Street, said Atkins used to lodge there and left about a month ago. Wilde visited him at this house on two occasions that she was cognisant of. She stated that one of the housemaids came to her and complained of the state of the sheets of the bed in which Atkins slept after Wilde's first visit. The sheets were stained in a peculiar way. It may be explained here, in order to make the witness's evidence understood, that the sodomistic act has

much the same effect as an enema inserted up the rectum. There is an almost immediate discharge, though not, of course, to the extent produced by the enema operation.

The next witness called was Sidney Mavor, a smooth-faced young fellow with dark hair and eyes. He stated that he was now in partnership with a friend in the City. He first made the acquaintance of the prisoner Taylor at the Gaiety Theatre in 1892. He afterwards visited him at Little College Street. Taylor was very civil and friendly and introduced him to different people. The witness did not think at that time that Taylor had any ulterior designs. One day, however, Taylor said to him, "I know a man, in an influential position, who could be of great use to you, Mavor. He likes young men when they're modest and nice in manners and appearance. I'll introduce you." It was arranged that they should dine at Kettner's Restaurant the next evening. He called for Taylor, who said, "I am glad you've made yourself pretty. Mr. Wilde likes nice, clean boys." That was the first time Wilde's name was mentioned. Arrived at the restaurant, they were shown into a private room. A man named Schwabe and Wilde and another gentleman came in later. He believed the other

gentleman to be Lord Alfred Douglas. The conversation at dinner was, the witness thought, peculiar, but he knew Wilde was a Bohemian and he did not think the talk strange. He was placed next to Wilde, who used occasionally to pull his ear or chuck him under the chin, but he did nothing that was actually objectionable. He, Wilde, said to Taylor, "Our little lad has pleasing manners; we must see more of him." Wilde took his address and the witness soon after received a silver cigarette-case inscribed "Sidney, from O. W. October 1892." "It was," said the innocent-looking witness, "quite a surprise to me!" In the same month he received a letter making an appointment at the Albemarle Hotel and he went there and saw Wilde. The witness explained that after he saw Mr. Russell, the solicitor, on March 30th, he did not visit Taylor, nor did he receive a letter from Taylor.

Sir EDWARD CLARKE. — "With regard to a certain dinner at which you were present. Was the gentleman who gave the dinner of some social position?"

WITNESS. — "Yes."

Mr. GRAIN. — "Taylor sent or gave you some cheques, I believe?"

WITNESS. — "He did."

Mr. GRAIN. — "Were they in payment of money you had advanced to him, merely?"

WITNESS. — "Yes."

Mr. C. F. GILL. — "The gentleman—'of position'—who gave the dinner was quite a young man, was he not?"

WITNESS. — "Yes."

Mr. GILL. — "Was Taylor, and Wilde also, present?"

WITNESS. — "Yes."

Mr. GILL. — "In fact, it was their first meeting, was it not?"

WITNESS. — "So I understand."

Mavor being dismissed from the box, Edward Shelley was the next witness. He gave his age as twenty-one and said that in 1891 he was employed by a firm of publishers in Vigo Street. At that time Wilde's books were being published by that firm. Wilde was in the habit of coming to the firm's place of business and he seemed to take note of the witness and generally stopped and spoke to him for a few moments. As Wilde was leaving Vigo Street one day he invited him to dine with him at the Albemarle Hotel. The witness kept the appointment—he was proud of the invitation—and they dined together in a public room. Wilde was

very kind and attentive, pressed witness to drink, said he could get him on and finally invited him to go with him to Brighton, Cromer, and Paris. The witness did not go. Wilde made him a present of a set of his writings, including the notorious and objectionable "Dorian Gray." Wilde wrote something in the books. "To one I like well," or something to that effect, but the witness removed the pages bearing the inscription. He only did that after the decision in the Queenberry case. He was ashamed of the inscriptions and felt that they were open to misconception. His father objected to his friendship with Wilde. At first the witness thought that the latter was a kind of philanthropist, fond of youth and eager to be of assistance to young men of any promise. Certain speeches and actions on the part of Wilde caused him to alter this opinion. Pressed as to the nature of the actions he complained of, he said that Wilde once kissed him and put his arms round him. The witness objected vigorously, according to his own statement, and Wilde later said he was sorry and that he had drank too much wine. About two years ago—in 1893—he wrote a certain letter to Wilde.

Sir Edward Clarke. — "On what subject?"

WITNESS. — "It was to break off the acquaintance."

Sir EDWARD. — "How did the letter begin?"

WITNESS. — "It began 'Sir'."

Sir EDWARD. — "Give me the gist of it."

WITNESS. — "I believe I said I have suffered more from my acquaintance with you than you are ever likely to know of. I further said that he was an immoral man, and that I would never, if I could help it, see him again."

Sir EDWARD. — "Did you ever see him again after that?"

WITNESS. — "I did."

Sir EDWARD. — "Why did you go and dine with Mr. Wilde a second time?"

WITNESS. — "I suppose I was a young fool. I tried to think the best of him."

Sir EDWARD. — "You seem to have put the worst possible construction on his liking for you. Did your friendly relations with Mr. Wilde remain unbroken until the time you wrote that letter in March, 1893?"

WITNESS. — "Yes."

Sir EDWARD. — "Have you seen Mr. Wilde since then?"

WITNESS. — "Yes."

Sir EDWARD. — " After that letter? "

WITNESS. — " Yes. "

Sir EDWARD. — " Where did you see him? "

WITNESS. — " I went to see him in Tite Street. "

Sir EDWARD CLARKE then proceeded to question the witness with regard to letters which he had written to Wilde both before and after the visits to the Albemarle Hotel, and in the course of his replies the witness said that he formed the opinion that " Wilde was really sorry for what he had done. "

Sir EDWARD CLARKE. — " What do you mean by 'what he had done'? "

WITNESS. — " His improper behaviour with young men. "

Sir EDWARD. — " Yet you say he never practised any actual improprieties upon you? "

WITNESS. — " Because he saw that I would never allow anything of the kind. He did not disguise from me what he wanted, or what his usual customs with young men were. "

Sir EDWARD. — " Yet you wrote him grateful letters breathing apparent friendship ? "

WITNESS. — " For the reason I have given. "

Sir EDWARD. — " Well, we'll leave that question. Now, tell me, why did you leave the Vigo Street firm of publishers ? "

WITNESS. — " Because it got to be known that I was friendly with Oscar Wilde. "

Sir EDWARD. — " Did you leave the firm of your own accord ? "

WITNESS. — " Yes. "

Sir EDWARD. — " Why ? "

WITNESS. — " People employed there—my fellow-clerks—chaffed me about my acquaintance with Wilde. "

Sir EDWARD. — " In what way ? "

WITNESS. — " They implied scandalous things. They called me 'Mrs. Wilde' and ' Miss Oscar. ' "

Sir EDWARD. — " So you left ? "

WITNESS. — " I resolved to put an end to an intolerable position. "

Sir EDWARD. — " You were in bad odour at home too, I think ? "

WITNESS. — " Yes, a little. "

Sir EDWARD. — " I put it to you that your father requested you to leave his house ? "

WITNESS. — " Yes. He strongly objected to my friendship with Wilde. "

Sir EDWARD. — " You were uneasy in your mind as to Wilde's object ? "

WITNESS. — " That is so. "

Sir EDWARD. — "When did your mental balance, if I can put it so, recover itself?"

WITNESS. — "About October or November last."

Sir EDWARD. — "And have you remained well ever since?"

WITNESS. — "I think so."

Sir EDWARD. — "Yet I find that in January of this year you were in serious trouble?"

WITNESS. — "In what way?"

Sir EDWARD. — "You were arrested for an assault upon your father?"

WITNESS. — "Yes, I was."

Sir EDWARD. — "Where were you taken?"

WITNESS. — "To the Fulham Police Station."

Sir EDWARD. — "You were offered bail?"

WITNESS. — "Yes."

Sir EDWARD. — "Did you send to Wilde and ask him to bail you out?"

WITNESS. — "Yes."

Sir EDWARD. — What happened?"

WITNESS. — "In an hour my father went to the station and I was liberated."

This witness now being released, the previous witness, Atkins, was recalled and a very sensational incident arose. During the luncheon interval, Mr. Robert

Humphreys, Wilde's solicitor, had been busy. Not satisfied with Atkins's replies to the questions put to him in cross-examination, he had searched the records at Scotland Yard and Rochester Road and made some startling discoveries. A folded document was handed up to the Judge. Mr. Justice Charles, who read it at once, assumed a severe expression. The document was understood to be a copy of a record from Rochester Road. Atkins, looking very sheepish and uncomfortable, re-entered the witness-box and the Court prepared itself for some startling disclosures.

Sir EDWARD CLARKE. — "Now, I warn you to attend and to be very careful. I am going to ask you a question; think before you reply."

The JUDGE. — "Just be careful now, Atkins."

Sir EDWARD. — "On June 10th, 1891, you were living at Tatchbrook Sreet?"

WITNESS. — "Yes."

Sir EDWARD. — "In Pimlico?"

WITNESS. — "Yes."

Sir EDWARD. — "James Burton was living there with you?"

WITNESS. — "He was."

Sir EDWARD. — "Were you both taken by two constables, 396 A & 500 A—you may have for-

gotten the officer's numbers—to Rochester Road Police Station and charged with demanding money from a gentleman with menaces. You had threatened to accuse him of a disgusting offence ? "

WITNESS. — (huskily)— " I was not charged with that. "

Sir EDWARD. — " Were you taken to the police station ? "

WITNESS. — " Yes. "

Sir EDWARD. — " You, and Burton ? "

WITNESS. — " Yes. "

Sir EDWARD. — " What were you charged with ? "

WITNESS. — " With striking a gentleman. "

Sir EDWARD. — " In what place was it alleged this happened ? "

WITNESS. — " At the card-table. "

Sir EDWARD. — " In your own room at Tatchbrook Street ? "

WITNESS. — " Yes. "

Sir EDWARD. — " What was the name of the gentleman ? "

WITNESS. — " I don't know. "

Sir EDWARD. — " How long had you known him ? "

WITNESS. — " Only that night. "

Sir EDWARD. — "Where had you met him?"

WITNESS. — "At the Alhambra."

Sir EDWARD. — "Had you seen him before that time?"

WITNESS. — "Not to speak to."

Sir EDWARD. — "Meeting him at the Alhambra, did he accompany you to Tatchbrook Street?"

WITNESS. — "Yes, to play cards."

Sir EDWARD. — "Not to accuse him, when there, of attempting to indecently handle you?"

WITNESS. — "No."

Sir EDWARD. — "Was Burton there?"

WITNESS. — "Yes."

Sir EDWARD. — "Anyone else?"

WITNESS. — "I don't think so."

Sir EDWARD. — "Was the gentleman sober?'

WITNESS. — "Oh, yes."

Sir EDWARD. — "What room did you go into?"

WITNESS. — "The sitting-room."

Sir EDWARD. — "Who called the police?"

WITNESS. — "I don't know."

Sir EDWARD. — "The landlady, perhaps?"

WITNESS. — "I believe she did."

Sir EDWARD. — "Did the landlady give you and Burton into custody?"

WITNESS. — "No; nobody did."

Sir EDWARD. — "Some person must have done. Who did?"

WITNESS. — "All I can say is, I did not hear anybody."

Sir EDWARD. — "At any rate you were taken to Rochester Road, and the gentleman went with you?"

WITNESS. — "Yes."

Police Constable 396 A was here called into court and took up a position close to the witness-box. He gazed curiously at Atkins, who wriggled about and eyed him uneasily.

Sir EDWARD. — "Now I ask you in the presence of this officer, was the statement made at the police-station that you and the gentleman had been in bed together?"

WITNESS. — "I don't think so."

Sir EDWARD. — "Think before you speak; it will be better for you. Did not the landlady actually come into the room and see you and the gentleman naked on or in the bed together?"

WITNESS. — "I don't remember that she did."

Sir EDWARD. — "You may as well tell me about it. You know. Was that statement made?"

WITNESS. — "Well, yes it was."

Sir EDWARD. — "You had endeavoured to force money out of this gentleman?"

WITNESS. — "I asked him for some money."

Sir EDWARD. — "At the police-station the gentleman refused to prosecute?"

WITNESS. — "Yes."

Sir EDWARD. — "So you and Burton were liberated?"

WITNESS. — "Yes."

Sir EDWARD. — "About two hours ago, Atkins, I asked you these very questions and you swore upon your oath that you had not been in custody at all, and had never been taken to Rochester Road Police Station. How came you to tell me those lies?"

WITNESS. — "I did not remember it."

Atkins looked somewhat crestfallen and abashed. Yet some of his former brazen impudence still gleamed upon his now scarlet face. He heaved a deep sigh of relief when told to leave the court by the judge, who pointed sternly to the doorway.

Of all the creatures associated with Wilde in these affairs, this Atkins was the lowest and most contemptible. For some years he had been in the habit of blackmailing men whom he knew to be inclined to perverted sexual vices, and his was a well-known figure up West. He constantly frequented the promenades of the music-halls. He "made up" his

eyes and lips, wore corsets and affected an effeminate air. He was an infallible judge of the class of man he wished to meet and rarely made a mistake. He would follow a likely subject about, stumble against him as though by accident and make an elaborate apology in mincing, female tones. Once in conversation with his "mark," he speedily contrived to make the latter aware that he did not object to certain proposals. He invariably permitted the beastly act before attempting blackmail, partly because it afforded him a stronger hold over his "victim" and partly because he rejoiced in the disgusting thing for its own sake. He was the butt of the ladies of the pavement round Piccadilly Circus, who used to shout after him, enquire sarcastically "if he had got off last night," and if his "toff hadn't bilked him." He would affect to laugh and pass the thing off with a joke; but, to his intimates, he assumed a great loathing for women of this class, whom he appeared to regard as dangerous obstacles to the exercise of his own foul trade. On several occasions he was assaulted by these women.

To return to the Trial of Wilde and Taylor. As soon as the enquiry was resumed, Mr. Charles Mathews went down into the cells and had an

interview with the prisoner Wilde, and on his return entered into serious consultation with his leader, Sir Edward Clarke. In the meanwhile, Taylor conversed with his counsel, Mr. Grain, across the rail of the dock. It was felt that an important announcement bearing on the conduct of the case was likely to be made. It came from Mr. Gill, representing the prosecution.

As soon as Mr. Justice Charles had taken his seat, the prosecuting counsel rose and said that having considered the indictment, he had decided not to ask for a verdict in the two counts charging the prisoners with conspiracy. Subdued expressions of surprise were audible from the public gallery when Mr. Gill delivered himself of this dramatic announcement, and the sensation was strengthened a little later when Sir Edward Clarke informed the jury that both the prisoners desired to give evidence and would be called as witnesses. These matters having been determined upon, Sir Edward Clarke rose and proceeded to make some severe criticisms upon the conduct of the prosecution in what he referred to as the literary part of the case. Hidden meanings, he said, had been most unjustly "read" into the poetical and prose works of his client and it seemed that an endeavour,

though a futile one, was to be made to convict Mr. Wilde because of a prurient construction which had been placed by his enemies upon certain of his works. He alluded particularly to "Dorian Gray," which was an allegory, pure and simple. According to the rather musty and far-fetched notions of the prosecution, it was an impure and simple allegory, but Wilde could not fairly be judged, he said, by the standards of other men, for he was a literary eccentric, though intellectually a giant, and he did not profess to be guided by the same sentiments as animated other and less highly-endowed men. He then called Mr. Wilde. Thep risoner rose with seeming alacrity from his place in the dock, walked with a firm tread and dignified demeanour to the witness-box, and leaning across the rail in the same easy and not ungraceful attitude that he assumed when examined by Mr. Carson in the libel action, prepared to answer the questions addressed to him by his counsel. Wilde was first interrogated as to his previous career. In the year 1884, he had married a Miss Lloyd, and from that time to the present he had continued to live with his wife at 16, Tite Street, Chelsea. He also occupied rooms in St. James's Place, which were rented for the purposes of his literary labours, as it was quite impos-

sible to secure quiet and mental repose at his own house, when his two young sons were at home. He had heard the evidence in this case against himself, and asserted that there was no shadow of a foundation for the charges of indecent behaviour alleged against himself.

Mr. Gill then rose to cross-examine and the Court at once became on the *qui vive*. Wilde seemed perfectly calm and did not change his attitude, or tone of polite deprecation.

Mr. Gill. — " You are acquainted with a publication entitled ' The Chameleon ' ? "

Witness. — " Very well indeed. "

Mr. Gill. — " Contributors to that journal are friends of yours ? "

Witness. — " That is so. "

Mr. Gill. — " I believe that Lord Alfred Douglas was a frequent contributor ? "

Witness. — " Hardly that, I think. He wrote some verses occasionally for the ' Chameleon, ' and, indeed, for other papers. "

Mr. Gill. — " The poems in question were somewhat peculiar ? "

Witness. — " They certainly were not mere commonplaces like so much that is labelled poetry. "

Mr. GILL. — " The tone of them met with your critical approval ? "

WITNESS. — " It was not for me to approve or disapprove. I leave that to the Reviews. "

Mr. GILL. — " At the trial Queensberry and Wilde you described them as ' beautiful poems ' ? "

WITNESS. — " I said something tantamount to that. The verses were original in theme and construction, and I admired them. "

Mr. GILL. — " In one of the sonnets by Lord A. Douglas a peculiar use is made of the word ' shame ' ? "

WITNESS. — " I have noticed the line you refer to. "

Mr. GILL. — " What significance would you attach to the use of that word in connection with the idea of the poem ? "

WITNESS. — " I can hardly take it upon myself to explain the thoughts of another man. "

Mr. GILL. — " You were remarkably friendly with the author ? Perhaps he vouchsafed you an explanation ? "

WITNESS. — " On one occasion he did. "

Mr. GILL. — " I should like to hear it. "

WITNESS. — " Lord Alfred explained that the

word ' shame ' was used in the sense of modesty, *i. e.* to feel shame or not to feel shame. "

Mr. GILL. — " You can, perhaps, understand that such verses as these would not be acceptable to the reader with an ordinarily balanced mind ? "

WITNESS. — " I am not prepared to say. It appears to me to be a question of taste, temperament and individuality. I should say that one man's poetry is another man's poison ! " (Loud laughter.)

Mr. GILL. — " I daresay ! There is another sonnet. What construction can be put on the line, ' I am the love that dare not speak its name ' ? "

WITNESS. — " I think the writer's meaning is quite unambiguous. The love he alluded to was that between an elder and younger man, as between David and Jonathan ; such love as Plato made the basis of his philosophy ; such as was sung in the sonnets of Shakespeare and Michael Angelo ; that deep spiritual affection that was as pure as it was perfect. It pervaded great works of art like those of Michael Angelo and Shakespeare. Such as ' passeth the love of woman. ' It was beautiful, it was pure, it was noble, it was intellectual—this love of an elder man with his experience of life, and

the younger with all the joy and hope of life before him. "

The witness made this speech with great emphasis and some signs of emotion, and there came from the gallery, at its conclusion, a medley of applause and hisses which his lordship at once ordered to be suppressed.

Mr. GILL. — " I wish to call your attention to the style of your correspondence with Lord A. Douglas. "

WITNESS. — " I am ready. I am never ashamed of the style of any of my writings. "

Mr. GILL. — " You are fortunate—or shall I say shameless ? I refer to passages in two letters in particular. "

WITNESS. — " Kindly quote them. "

Mr. GILL. — " In letter number one. You use this expression : ' Your slim gilt soul, ' and you refer to Lord Alfred's " rose-leaf lips. "

WITNESS. — " The letter is really a sort of prose sonnet in answer to an acknowledgement of one I had received from Lord Alfred. "

Mr. GILL. — " Do you think that an ordinarily-constituted being would address such expressions to a younger man ? "

WITNESS. — " I am not, happily, I think, an ordinarily constituted being."

Mr. GILL. — " It is agreeable to be able to agree with you, Mr. Wilde." (Laughter).

WITNESS. — " There is, I assure you, nothing in either letter of which I need be ashamed."

Mr. GILL. — " You have heard the evidence of the lad Charles Parker?"

WITNESS. — " Yes."

Mr. GILL. — " Of Atkins?"

WITNESS. — " Yes."

Mr. GILL. — " Of Shelley?"

WITNESS. — " Yes."

Mr. GILL. — " And these witnesses have, you say, lied throughout?"

WITNESS. — " Their evidence as to my association with them, as to the dinners taking place and the small presents I gave them, is mostly true. But there is not a particle of truth in that part of the evidence which alleged improper behaviour."

Mr. GILL. — " Why did you take up with these youths?"

WITNESS. — " I am a lover of youth." (Laughter).

Mr. GILL. — " You exalt youth as a sort of God?"

WITNESS. — " I like to study the young in

everything. There is something fascinating in youthfulness."

Mr. GILL. — "So you would prefer puppies to dogs, and kittens to cats?" (Laughter).

WITNESS. — "I think so. I should enjoy, for instance, the society of a beardless, briefless, barrister quite as much as that of the most accomplished Q. C." (Loud laughter).

Mr. GILL. — "I hope the former, whom I represent in large numbers, will appreciate the compliment." (More laughter). "These youths were much inferior to you in station?"

WITNESS. — "I never enquired, nor did I care, what station they occupied. I found them, for the most part, bright and entertaining. I found their conversation a change. It acted as a kind of mental tonic."

Mr. GILL. — "You saw nothing peculiar or suggestive in the arrangement of Taylor's rooms?"

WITNESS. — "I cannot say that I did. They were Bohemian. That is all. I have seen stranger rooms."

Mr. GILL. — "You never suspected the relations that might exist between Taylor and his young friends?"

WITNESS. — "I had no need to suspect anything.

Taylor's relations with his friends appeared to me to be quite normal."

Mr. GILL. — "You have attended to the evidence of the witness Mavor?"

WITNESS. — "I have."

Mr. GILL. — "Is it true or false?"

WITNESS. — "It is mainly true, but false inferences have been drawn from it as from most of the evidence. Truth may be found, I believe, at the bottom of a well. It is, apparently difficult to find it in a court of law." (Laughter.)

Mr. GILL. — "Nevertheless we endeavour to extract it. Did the witness Mavor write you expressing a wish to break off the acquaintance?"

WITNESS. — "I received a rather unaccountable and impertinent letter from him for which he afterwards expressed great regret."

Mr. GILL. — "Why should he have written it if your conduct had altogether been blameless?"

WITNESS. — "I do not profess to be able to explain the motives of most of the witnesses. Mavor may have been told some falsehood about me. His father was greatly incensed at his conduct at this time, and, I believe, attributed his son's erratic courses to his friendship with me. I do not think Mavor altogether to blame. Pressure was brought to bear upon

him and he was not then quite right in his mind."

Mr. Gill. — "You made handsome presents to these young fellows?"

Witness. — "Pardon me, I differ. I gave two or three of them a cigarette-case. Boys of that class smoke a good deal of cigarettes. I have a weakness for presenting my acquitances with cigarette-cases."

Mr. Gill. — "Rather an expensive habit if indulged in indiscriminately."

Witness. — "Less extravagant than giving jewelled-garters to ladies." (Laughter).

When a few more unimportant questions had been asked, Wilde left the witness-box, returning to the dock with the same air of what may be described as serious easiness. The impression created by his replies was not, upon the whole, favorable to his cause.

His place was taken by the prisoner Taylor. He said that he was thirty-three years of age and was educated at Marlborough. When he was twenty-one he came into £45,000. In a few years he ran through this fortune, and at about the time he went to Chapel Street, he was made a bankrupt. The charges made against him of misconduct were entirely unfounded. He was asked point-blank if he had

not been given to sodomy from his early youth, and if he had not been expelled from a public-school for being caught in a compromising situation with a small boy in the lavatory. Taylor was also asked if he had not actually obtained a living since his bankruptcy by procuring lads and young men for rich gentlemen whom he knew to be given to this vice. He was also asked if he had not extracted large sums of money from wealthy men by threatening to accuse them of immoralities. To all these plain questions he returned in direct answer, "No".

After the luncheon interval, Sir Edward Clark rose to address the jury in defence of Oscar Wilde. He began by carefully analysing the evidence. He declared that the wretches who had come forward to admit their own disgrace were shameless creatures incapable of one manly thought or one manly action. They were, without exception, blackmailers. They lived by luring men to their rooms, generally, on the pretence that a beautiful girl would be provided for them on their arrival. Once in their clutches, these victims could only get away by paying a large sum of money unless they were prepared to face and deny the most disgraceful charges. Innocent men constantly paid rather than face the odium attached to the breath even of such scandals. They had, moreover,

wives and children, daughters, maybe or a sister whose honour or name they were obliged to consider. Therefore they usually submitted to be fleeced and in this way, this wretched Wood and the abject Atkins had been able to go about the West-end well-fed and well-dressed. These youths had been introduced to Wilde. They were pleasant-spoken enough and outwardly decent in their language and conduct. Wilde was taken in by them and permitted himself to enjoy their society. He did not defend Wilde for this; he had unquestionably shown imprudence, but a man of his temperament could not be judged by the standards of the average individual. These youths had come forward to make these charges in a conspiracy to ruin his client.

Was it likely, he asked, that a man of Wilde's cleverness would put himself so completely in the power of these harpies as he would be if guilty of only a tenth of the enormities they alleged against him? If Wilde practised these acts so openly and so flagrantly—if he allowed the facts to come to the knowledge of so many—then he was a fool who was not fit to be at large. If the evidence was to be credited, these acts of gross indecency which culminated in actual crime were done in so open a manner as to compel the attention of landladies and house-

maids. He was not himself—and he thanked Heaven for it—versed in the acts of those who committed these crimes against nature. He did not know under what circumstances they could be practised. But he believed that this was a vice which, because of the horror and repulsion it excited, because of the fury it provoked against those guilty of it, was conducted with the utmost possible secrecy. He respectfully submitted that no jury could find a man guilty on the evidence of these tainted witnesses.

Take the testimony, he said, of Atkins. This young man had denied that he had ever been charged at a police station with alleging blackmail. Yet he was able to prove that he had grossly perjured himself in this and other directions. That was a sample of the evidence and Atkins was a type of the witnesses.

The only one of these youths who had ever attempted to get a decent living or who was not an experienced blackmailer was Mavor, and he had denied that Wilde had ever been guilty of any impropriety with him.

The prosecution had sought to make capital out of two letters written by Wilde to Lord Alfred Douglas. He pointed out a fact which was of considerable importance, namely, that Wilde had

produced one of these letters himself. Was that the act of a man who had reason to fear the contents of a letter being known? Wilde never made any secret of visiting Taylor's rooms. He found there society which afforded him variety and change. Wilde made no secret of giving dinners to some of the witnesses. He thought that they were poorly off and that a good dinner at a restaurant did not often come their way. On only one occasion did he hire a private room. The dinners were perfectly open and above-board. Wilde was an extraordinary man and he had written letters which might seem high-flown, extravagant, exaggerated, absurd if they liked; but he was not afraid or ashamed to produce these letters. The witnesses Charles Parker, Alfred Wood and Atkins had been proved to have previously been guilty of blackmailing of this kind and upon their uncorroborated evidence surely the jury would not convict the prisoner on such terrible charges.

"Fix your minds," concluded Sir Edward earnestly, "firmly on the tests that ought to be applied to the evidence as a whole before you can condemn a fellow-man to a charge like this. Remember all that this charge implied, of implacable ruin and inevitable disgrace. Then I trust that the result of your deliberations will be to gratify those

thousand hopes that are waiting upon your verdict. I trust that verdict will clear from this fearful imputation one of the most accomplished and renowned men-of-letters of to-day."

At the end of this peroration, there was some slight applause at the back of the court, but it was hushed almost at once. Wilde had paid great attention to the speech on his behalf and on one or two occasions had pressed his hands to his eyes as if expressing some not unnatural emotion. The speech concluded, however, he resumed his customary attitude and awaited with apparent firmness all that might befall.

Mr. Grain then rose to address the jury on behalf of Taylor. He submitted that there was really no case against his client. An endeavour had been made to prove that Taylor was in the habit of introducing to Wilde youths whom he knew to be amenable to the practices of the latter and that he got paid for this degrading work. The attempt to establish this disgusting association between Taylor and Wilde had completely broken down. He was, it is true, acquainted with Parker, Wood and Atkins. He had seen them constantly in restaurants and music-halls, and they had at first forced themselves upon his notice and thus got acquainted with a man

whom they designed for blackmail. All the resources of the Crown had been unable to produce any corroboration of the charges made by these witnesses. How had Taylor got his livelihood, it might be asked? He was perfectly prepared to answer the question. He had been living on an allowance made him by members of his late father's firm, a firm with which all there present were familiar. Was it in the least degree likely that such scenes as the witnesses described, with such apparent candour and such wealth of filthy detail, could have taken place in Taylor's own appartments? It was incredible that a man could thus risk almost certain discovery. In conclusion, he confidently looked for the acquittal of his client, who was guilty of nothing more than having made imprudent acquaintances and having trusted too much to the descriptions of themselves given by others.

Mr. Gill then replied for the prosecution in a closely-reasoned and most able speech, which occupied two hours in delivery and which created an enormous impression in the crowded court. He commented at great length upon the evidence. He contended that in a case of this description corroboration was of comparatively minor importance, for it was not in the least likely that acts of the kind

alleged would be practised before a third party who might afterwards swear to the fact. Therefore, when the witnesses described what had transpired when they and the prisoners were alone, he did not think that corroboration could possibly be given. There was not likely to be an eye-witness of the facts. But in respect to many things he declared the evidence was corroborated. Whatever the character of these youths might be, they had given evidence as to certain facts and no cross-examination, however adroit, however vigorous, had shaken their testimony, or caused them to waver about that which was evidently firmly implanted in their memories. A man might conceivably come forward and commit perjury. But these youths were accusing themselves, in accusing another, of shameful and infamous acts, and this they would hardly do if it were not the truth. Wilde had made presents to these youths and it was noticeable that the gifts were invariably made after he had been alone, at some rooms or other, with one or another of the lads. In the circumstances, even a silver cigarette-case was corroboration. His learned friend had protested against any evil construction being placed upon these gifts and these dinners; but, in the name of commonsense, what other construction was possible? When

they heard of aman like Wilde, presumably of refined and cultured tastes, who might if he wished, enjoy the society of the best and most cultivated men and women in London, accompanying to Nice and other places on the Continent, uninformed, unintellectual and vulgar, ill-bred youths of the type of Charles Parker, then, in Heaven's name what were they to think? All those visits, all those dinners, all those gifts, were corroboration. They served to confirm the truth of the statements made by the youths who confessed to the commission of acts for which the things he had quoted were positive and actual payment.

In the case of the witness Sidney Mavor, it was clear that Wilde had, in some way, continued to disgust this youth. Some acts of Wilde, either towards himself, or towards others, had offended him. Was not the letter which Mavor had addressed to the prisoner, desiring the cessation of their friendship, corrobation?

(At this moment his Lordship interposed, and said that although the evidence of this witness was clearly of importance, he had denied that he had been guilty of impropriety, and he did not think the count in reference to Mavor could stand. After

some discussion this count was struck out of the indictment).

Before concluding Mr. Gill stated that he had withdrawn the conspiracy count to prevent any embarrassment to Sir Edward Clarke, who had complained that he was affected in his defence by the counts being joined. Mr. Gill said, in conclusion, that it was the duty of the jury to express their verdict without fear or favour. They owed a duty to Society, however sorry they might feel themselves at the moral downfall of an eminent man, to protect Society from such scandals by removing from its heart a sore which could not fail in time to corrupt and taint it all.

Mr. Justice Charles then commenced his summing-up. His lordship at the outset said he thought Mr. Gill had taken a wise course in withdrawing the conspiracy counts and thus relieving them all of an embarrassing position. He did not see why the conspiracy counts need have been inserted at all, and he should direct the jury to return a verdict of acquittal on those charges as well as upon one other count against Taylor, to which he would further allude, and upon which no sufficient evidence had been given.

He the learned judge, asked the jury to apply

their minds solely to the evidence which had been given. Any pre-conceived notion which they might have formed from reading about the case he urged them to dismiss from their minds, and to deal with the case as it had been presented to them by the witnesses.

His Lordship went on to ask the jury not to attach too much importance to the uncorroborated evidence of accomplices in such cases as these. Had there been no corroboration in this case it would have been his duty to instruct the jury accordingly; but he was clearly of opinion that there was corroboration to all the witnesses; not, it is true, the conspiracy testimony of eye-witnesses, but corroboration of the narrative generally.

Three of the witnesses, Chas. Parker, Wood and Atkins, were not only accomplices, but they had been properly described by Sir Edward Clarke as persons of bad character. Atkins, out of his own mouth, was convicted of having told the most gross and deliberate falsehoods. The jury knew how this matter came before them as the outcome of the trial of Lord Queensberry for alleged libel.

The learned judge proceeded to outline the features of the Queensberry trial, commenting most upon what was called the literary part of Wilde's examina-

tion in that case. The judge said that he had not read " Dorian Gray ", but extracts were read at the former trial and the present jury had a general idea of the story. He did not think they ought to base any unfavourable inference upon the fact that Wilde was the author of that work. It would not be fair to do so, for while it was true that there were many great writers, such for instance as Sir Walter Scott and Charles Dickens, who never penned an offensive line, there were other great authors whose pens dealt with subjects not so innocent.

As for Wilde's aphorisms in the " Chameleon ", some were amusing, some were cynical, and some were, if he might be allowed to say so, simple, but there was nothing *in per se*, to convict Wilde of indecent practices. However, the same paper contained a very indecent contribution; " The Priest and the Acolyte ". Mr. Wilde had nothing to do with that. In the " Chameleon " also appeared two poems by Lord Alfred Douglas, one called " In Praise of Shame ", and the other called " Two Loves ". It was said that these sonnets had an immoral tendency and that Wilde approved them. He was examined at great length about these sonnets, and was also asked about the two letters written by him to Lord

Alfred Douglas—letters that had been written before the publication of the above mentioned poems.

In the previous case Mr. Carson had insisted that these letters were indecent. On the other hand, Wilde had told them that he was not ashamed of them, as they were intended in the nature of prose poems and breathed the pure love of one man for another, such a love as David had for Jonathan, and such as Plato described as the beginning of wisdom.

He would next deal with the actual charges, and would first call their attention to the offence alleged to have been committed with Edward Shelley at the beginning of 1892. Shelley was undoubtedly in the position of an accomplice, but his evidence was corroborated. He was not, however, tainted with the offences with which Parker, Wood and Atkins were connected. He seemed to be a person of some education and a fondness for Literature. As to Shelley's visit to the Albemarle Hotel, the jury were the best judges of the demeanour of the witness. Wilde denied all the allegations of indecency though he admitted the other parts of the young man's story. His Lordship called attention to the letters written by Shelley to Wilde in 1892, 1893 and 1894. It was, he said, a very anxious part of the jury's task to account for the tone of these letters, and for Shelley's conduct

generally. It became a question as to whether or no his mind was disordered. He felt bound to say that though there was evidence of great excitability, to talk of either Shelley or Mavor as an insane youth was an exaggeration, but it would be for the jury to draw their own conclusions.

Passing to the case of Atkins, the judge drew attention to his meeting with Taylor in November 1892, to the dinner at the Café Florence, at which Wilde, Taylor, Atkins and Lord A. Douglas were present, and to the visit of Atkins to Paris in company with Wilde.

After dwelling on the circumstances of that visit, his lordship referred to Wilde's two visits to Atkins in Osnaburgh Street in December 1893. Wilde explained the Paris visit by saying that Schwabe had arranged to take Atkins to Paris, but being unable to leave at the time appointed he asked Wilde to take charge of the youth, and he did so out of friendship for Schwabe. Wilde further denied that he was much in Atkins' company when in Paris. Atkins certainly was an unreliable witness and had obviously given an incorrect version of his relations with Burton. He told the grossest falsehoods with regard to their arrest, and was convicted out of his own mouth when recalled by Sir E. Clarke. It was for

the jury to decide how much of Atkins's evidence they might safely believe.

Then there were the events described as having occured at the Savoy Hotel in March 1892. He would ask the jury to be careful in the evidence of the chamber-maid, Jane Cotter, and the interpretation they put upon it. If her evidence and that of the Masseur Mijji, were true, then Wilde's evidence on that part of the case was untrue, and the jury must use their own discretion. He did not wish to enlarge upon this most unpleasant part of the whole unpleasant case, but it was necessary to remind the jury as discreetly as he could that the chamber-maid had objected to making the bed on several occasions after Wilde and Atkins had been in the bed-room alone together. There were, she had affirmed, indications on the sheets that conduct of the grossest kind had been indulged in. He thought it his duty to remind the jury that there might be an innocent explanation of these stains, though the evidence of Jane Cotter certainly afforded a kind of corroboration of these charges and of Atkins's own story. In reference to the case of Wood, he contrasted Wood's account with that of Wilde.

It seemed that Lord Alfred Douglas had met Wood at Taylor's rooms. In response to a telegram from

the former, Wood went to the Café Royal and there met Wilde for the first time, Wilde speaking first. On the other hand, Wilde represented that Wood spoke first. The jury might think that, in any case, the circumstances of that meeting were remarkable, especially when taken in conjunction with what followed. There was no doubt that Wood had fallen into evil courses and he and Allen had extracted the sum of £300 in blackmail. The interview between Wilde and Wood prior to the latter's departure for America was remarkable. A sum of money, said to be £30, was given by Wilde to Wood, and Wood returned some of Wilde's letters that had somehow come into his possession. Wood, however, kept back one letter which got into Allen's possession. Wood got £5 more on the following day, went to America, and while there wrote to Taylor a letter in which occured the passage. "Tell Oscar if he likes he can send me a draft for an Easter Egg." It would be for the jury to consider what would have been the inner meaning of these and other transactions.

As to the prisoner Taylor, he had, on his own admission, led a life of idleness, and got through a fortune of £45,000. It was alleged that the prisoner had virtually turned his apartments into a bagnio or

brothel, in which young men took the place of prostitutes, and that his character in this regard was well known to those who were secretly given to this particular vice. One of the offences imputed to Taylor had reference to Charles Parker, who had spoken of the peculiar arrangement of the rooms. There were two bedrooms in the inner room with folding doors between and the windows were heavily draped, so that no one from the opposite houses could possibly see what was going on inside. Heavy curtains, it was said, hung before all the doors, so that it could not be possible for an eave's-dropper to hear what was proceeding inside. There was a curiously shaped sofa in the sitting-room and the whole aspect of the room resembled, it was asserted, a fashionable resort for vice.

Wilde was undoubtedly present at some of the tea parties given there, and did not profess to be surprised at what he saw there. It had been shown that both the Parkers went to these rooms, and further, that Charles Parker had received £30 of the blackmail extorted by Wood and Allen.

Charles Parker's evidence was therefore doubly-tainted like that of Wood and Atkins, but his evidence was to some extent confirmed by that of his brother William. Some parts of Charles Parker's

evidence were also corroborated by other witnesses, as for instance, by Marjorie Bancroft, who swore that she saw Wilde visit Charles Parker's rooms in Park Walk.

It was admitted that this Parker visited Wilde at St. James' Place. Charles Parker had been arrested with Taylor in the Fitzroy Square raid and this went to show that they were in the habit of associating with those suspected of offences of the kind alleged. Both, however, were on that occasion discharged and Parker enlisted in the army. It was quite manifest that Charles Parker was of a low class of morality.

That concluded the various charges made in this case and he had very little to add. Mavor's evidence had little or no value with reference to the issues now before the jury, except as showing how he became acquainted with Wilde and Taylor. So far as it went, Mavor's evidence was rather in favour of Wilde than otherwise and nothing indecent had been proved against that witness.

In conclusion, his lordship submitted the case to the jury in the confident hope that they would do justice to themselves on the one hand, and to the two defendants on the other. The learned judge concluded by further directing the jury as to the issues,

and asked them to form their opinions on the evidence, and to give the case their careful consideration.

The judge left the following questions to the jury: —

First, whether Wilde committed certain offences with Shelley, Wood, with a person or persons unknown at the Savoy Hotel, or with Charles Parker?

Secondly, whether Taylor procured the commission of those acts or any of them?

Thirdly, did Wilde or Taylor, or either of them attempt to get Atkins to commit certain offences with Wilde, and Fourthly, did Taylor commit certain acts with either Charles Parker or Wood?

The Jury retired at 1.35, the summing-up of the judge having taken exactly three hours.

At three o'clock a communication was brought from the jury, and conveyed by the Clerk of arraigns to the Judge, and shortly afterwards the jury had luncheon taken in to them.

At 4.15 the judge sent for the Clerk of arraigns, Mr. Avory, who proceeded to his lordship's private room.

Subsequently, Mr. Avory went to the jury, apparently with a communication from the judge and

returned in a few minutes to the judge's private room.

Shortly before five o'clock the usher brought a telegram from one of the jurors, and after it had been shown to the clerk of arraigns it was allowed to be despatched.

Eventually the jury returned into court at a quarter past five o'clock.

THE VERDICT

THE JUDGE. — "I have received a communication from you to the effect that you are unable to arrive at an agreement. Now, is there anything you desire to ask me in reference to the case?"

THE FOREMAN. — "I have put that question to my fellow-jurymen, my lord, and I do not think there is any doubt that we cannot agree upon three of the questions."

THE JUDGE. — "I find from the entry which you have written against the various subdivisions of N°. 1 that you cannot agree as to any of those subdivisions?"

THE FOREMAN. — "That is so, my lord."

THE JUDGE. — "Is there no prospect of an agreement if you retire to your room?"

THE FOREMAN. — "I fear not."

THE JUDGE. — "You have not been inconvenienced; I ordered what you required, and there is no prospect that, with a little more deliberation, you may come to an agreement as to some of them?"

THE FOREMAN. — "My fellow-jurymen say there is no possibility."

THE JUDGE. — "I am very unwilling to prejudice your deliberations, and I have no doubt that you have done your best to arrive at an agreement. On the other hand I would point ot to you that the inconveniences of a new trial are very great. If you thought that by deliberating a reasonable time you could arrive at a conclusion upon any of the questions I have asked you, I would ask you to do so."

THE FOREMAN. — "We considered the matter before coming into court and I do not think there is any chance of agreement. We have considered it again and again."

THE JUDGE. — "If you tell me that, I do not think I am justified in detaining you any longer."

Sir EDWARD CLARKE. — "I wish to ask, my lord, that a verdict may be given in the conspiracy counts."

Mr. GILL. — "I wish to oppose that."

THE JUDGE. — "I directed the acquittal of the

prisoners on the conspiracy counts this morning. I thought that was the right course to adopt, and the same remark might be made with regard to the two counts in which Taylor was charged with improper conduct towards Wood and Parker. It was unfortunate that the real and material questions which had occupied the jury's attention for such a length of time were matters upon which the jury were unable to agree. Upon these matters and upon the counts which were concerned with them, I must discharge the jury."

Sir Edward Clarke. — "I wish to apply for bail, then for M. Wilde."

Mr. Hall. — "And I make the same application on behalf of Taylor."

The Judge, — "I dont' feel able to accede to the applications."

Sir Edward. — "I shall probably renew the application, my lord."

The Judge. — "That would be to a judge in chambers."

Mr. Gill. — "The case will assuredly be tried again and probably it will go to the next Sessions."

The two prisoners, who had listened to all this very attentively, were then conducted from the dock.

Wilde had listened to the foreman of the jury's statement without any show of feeling.

It was stated that the failure of the jury to agree upon a verdict was owing to three out of the twelve being unable upon the evidence placed before them to arrive at any other conclusion than that of "Not Guilty."

The following day Mr. Baron Pollock decided that Oscar Wilde should be allowed out on bail in his own recognisances of £2,500 and two sureties of £1,250 each. Wilde was brought up at Bow Street next day and the sureties attended. After a further application, bail in his case was granted and he went out of prison, for the present a free man, but with NEMESIS, in the shape of the second trial, awaiting him!

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The second trial of Oscar Wilde, with its dramatic finale, for no one thought much of its consequences to Alfred Taylor, came on in the third week of May at the Old Bailey.

It was agreed to take the cases of the prisoners separately, Taylor's first. Sir Edward Clarke, who still represented Wilde, stated that be should make

an application at the end of Taylor's trial that Wilde's case should stand over till the next sessions. His lordship said that application had better be postponed till the end of the first trial, significantly adding. "If there should be an acquittal, so much the better for the other prisoner." Meanwhile Wilde was to be released on bail.

Sir Francis Lockwood, who now represented the prosecution, then went over all the details of the intimacy of the Parkers and Wood with Taylor and Wilde and called Charles Parker, who repeated his former evidence, including a very serious allegation against the prisoner. He stated in so many words that Taylor had kept him at his rooms for a whole week during which time they rarely went out, and had repeatedly committed sodomy with him. The witness unblushingly asserted that they slept together and that Taylor called him "Darling" and referred to him as "my little Wife". When he left Taylor's rooms the latter paid him some money, said he should never want for cash and that he would introduce him to men "prepared to pay for that kind of thing". Cross-examined; Charles Parker admitted that he had previously been guilty of this offence, but had determined never to submit to such treatment again. Taylor over-persuaded him. He was

nearly drunk and incapable, the first time, of making a moral resistance.

Alfred Wood also described his acquaintance with Taylor and his visits to what he termed the "snuggery" at Little College Street, but which quite as appropriately could have been designed by a name which would have the additional merit of strictly describing it and of rhyming with it at the same time! It was not at all clear, however, that Taylor was responsible, at least directly, for the introduction of Alfred Wood to Wilde as the indictment suggested. This was effected by a third person, whose name had not as yet been introduced into the case.

Mrs. Grant, the landlady at 13 Little College Street, described Taylor's rooms. She was not aware, she said, that they were put to an improper use, but she had remarked to her husband the care taken that whatever went on there should be hidden from the eyes and ears of others. Young men used to come there and remain some time with Taylor, and Wilde was a frequent visitor. Taylor provided much of his own bed-linen and she noticed that the pillows had lace and were generally elaborate and costly.

The prosecution next called a new witness, Emily

Becca, chambermaid at the Savoy Hotel, who stated that she had complained to the management of the state in which she found the bed-linen and the utensils of the room. When pressed for particulars the witness hesitated, and after stating that she refused to make the bed or empty the " chamber, " she said she handed in her notice but was prevailed upon to withdraw it. Then by a series of adroit questions Counsel obtained the particulars. The bed-linen was stained. The colour was brown. The towels were similarly discoloured. One of the pillows was marked with face-powder. There was excrement in one of the utensils in the bedroom. Wilde had handed her half a sovereign but when she saw the state of the room after he had gone she gave the coin to the management.

Evidence with regard to Wilde's rooms at St. James' Place was given by Thomas Price, who was able to identify Taylor as one of the callers.

Mrs. Gray—no relation, haply, to the notorious "Dorian"—of 3 Chapel Street, Chelsea, deposed that Taylor stayed at her house from August 1893 to the end of that year. Formal and minor items of evidence concluded the case for the prosecution of Taylor, and Mr. Grain proceeded to open his

defence by calling the prisoner into the witness-box. Mr. Grain examined him.

Mr. Grain. — "What is your age?"

Witness. — "I am thirty-three."

Mr. Grain. — "You are the son of the late Henry Taylor, who was a manufacturer of an article of food in large demand?"

Witness. — "I am."

Mr. Grain. — "You were at Marlborough School?"

Witness. — "Gill I was seventeen."

Mr. Grain. — "You inherited £45,000 I believe?"

Witness. — "Yes."

Mr. Grain. — "And spent it?"

Witness. — "It went."

Mr. Grain. — "Since then you have had no occupation?"

Witness. — "I have lived upon an allowance made me."

Mr. Grain. — "Is there any truth in the evidence of Charles Parker that you misconducted yourself with him."

Witness. — "Not the slightest."

Mr. Grain. — "What rooms had you at Little College Street?"

WITNESS. — "One bedroom, but it was subdivided and I believe there was generally a bed in each division."

Mr. GRAIN. — "You had a good many visitors?"

WITNESS. — "Oh, yes."

Sir FRANK LOCKWOOD. — "Did Charles Mavor stay with you then?"

WITNESS. — "Yes, about a week."

Sir FRANK. — "When?"

WITNESS. — "When I first went there, in 1892."

Sir FRANK. — "What is his age?"

WITNESS. — "He is now 26 or 27."

Sir FRANK. — "Do you remember going through a form of marriage with Mavor?"

WITNESS. — "No, never."

Sir FRANK. — "Did you tell Parker you did?"

WITNESS. — "Nothing of the kind."

Sir FRANK. — "Did you not place a wedding-ring on his finger and go to bed with him that night as though he were your lawful wife?"

WITNESS. — "It is all false. I deny it all."

Sir FRANK. — "Did you ever sleep with Mavor?"

WITNESS. — "I think I did the first night—after, he had a separate bed."

Sir FRANK. — "Did you induce Mavor to attire himself as a woman?"

WITNESS. — "Certainly I did not."

Sir FRANK. — "But there were articles of women's dress at your rooms?"

WITNESS. — "No. There was a fancy dress for a female, a theatrical costume."

Sir FRANK. — "Was it made for a woman?"

WITNESS. — "I think so."

Sir FRANK. — "Perhaps you wore it?"

WITNESS. — "I put it on once by way of a lark."

Sir FRANK. — "On no other occasion?"

WITNESS. — "I wore it once, too, at a fancy dress ball."

Sir FRANK. — "I suggest that you often dressed as a woman?"

WITNESS. — "No."

Sir FRANK. — "You wore, and caused Mavor afterwards, to wear lace drawers—a woman's garment—with the dress?"

WITNESS. — "I wore knicker-bockers and stockings when I wore it at the fancy dress ball."

Sir FRANK. — "And a woman's wig, which afterwards did for Mavor?"

WITNESS. — "No, the wig was made for me. I was going to a fancy-ball as 'Dick Whittington'."

Sir FRANK. — "Who introduced you to the Parkers?"

WITNESS. — " A friend named Harrington at the St. James's Restaurant. "

Sir FRANK. — " You invited them to your rooms ? "

WITNESS. — " I did. "

Sir FRANK. — " Why ? "

WITNESS. — " I found them very nice. "

Sir FRANK. — " You were acquainted with a young fellow named Mason ? "

WITNESS. — " Yes. "

Sir FRANK. — " He visited you ? "

WITNESS. — " Two or three times only, I think. "

Sir FRANK. — " Did you induce him to commit a filthy act with you ? "

WITNESS. — " Never. "

Sir FRANK. — " He has written you letters ? "

WITNESS. — " That's very likely. "

Sir FRANK. — " The Solicitor General proposes to read one. "

The letter was as follows :—

" Dear Alf,

Let me have some money as soon as you can. I would not ask you for it if I could get any myself. You know the business is not so easy. There is a lot of trouble attached to it.

Come home soon, dear, and let us go out toge-

ther sometimes. Have very little news. Going to a dinner on Monday and a theatre to-night.

With much love,

Yours always,

CHARLES."

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. — (Severely) "I ask you, Taylor, for an explanation, for it requires one, of the use of the words "come home soon, dear", as between two men."

TAYLOR. — (Laughing nervously) "I do not see anything in it."

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. — "Nothing in it?"

WITNESS. — "Well, I am not responsible for the expressions of another."

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. — "You allowed yourself to be addressed in this strain?"

WITNESS. — "Its the way you read it."

The summing-up followed and after a consultation of three-quarters of an hour, the jury returned a verdict against Taylor on the indecency counts, not agreeing, however, as to the charges of procuration. Sentence was postponed, pending the result of the trial of Oscar Wilde, which began next day.

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Wilde had meanwhile been at large on bail. The

one charge of " conspiring with Alfred Taylor to procure " had been dropped, and the indictment of misdemeanour alleged that the prisoner unlawfully committed various acts with Charles Parker, Alfred Wood, Edward Shelley, and certain persons unknown.

The plea of " Not Guilty " was recorded.

The case for the prosecution was opened by calling Edward Shelley, the young man who had been employed by the Vigo Street publishers. Shelley repeated the story of the beginning and the progress of his intimacy with Wilde. It began, he said, in 1891 ; in March 1893, they quarrelled. The witness had been subjected by the prisoner to attempts at improper conduct. Oscar had, to be plain, on several occasions, placed his hand on the private parts of the witness and sought to put his, witness's, hand in the same indelicate position as regards Wilde's own person. Witness resented these acts at the time ; had told Wilde not to be ' a beast ', and the latter expressed his sorrow. " But I am so fond of you, Edward, " he had said.

The Witness wrote Wilde that he would not see him again. He spoke in the letter of these and other acts of impropriety and made use of the expression, " I was entrapped." Witness explained

to the court, " He knew I admired him very much and he took advantage of me—of my admiration and—well, I wont' say innocence. I don't know what to call it. "

These are some of the letters which Shelley wrote to Wilde :

October 27, 1892.

Oscar : Will you be at home on Sunday evening next ? I am most anxious to see you. I would have called this evening, but I am suffering from nervousness, the result of insomnia and am obliged to remain at home.

I have longed to see you all through the week. I have much to tell you. Do not think me forgetful in not coming before, because I shall never forget your kindness, and am conscious that I can never sufficiently express my thankfulness. "

Another letter ran :

October 25, 1894.

Oscar : I want to go away and rest somewhere—I think in Cornwall for two weeks. I am determined to live a truly Christian life, and I accept poverty as part of my religion, but I must have health. I have so much to do for my mother. "

Sir Edward Clarke. — " Now, Mr. Shelley, do you mean to tell the jury that having in your

mind, that this man had behaved disgracefully towards you, you wrote that letter of October 27, 1892 ? "

WITNESS. — " Yes. Because after those few occurrences he treated me very well. He seemed really sorry for what he had done. "

Sir EDWARD. — " He introduced you to his home ? "

WITNESS. — " Yes, to his wife. I dined with them and he seemed to take a real interest in me. "

Sir EDWARD. — " You have met Lord Alfred Douglas ? "

WITNESS. — " Yes, at his rooms at the ' Varsity '. "

Sir EDWARD. — " He was kind to you ? "

WITNESS. — " Yes. He gave me a suit of clothes while I was there. "

Sir EDWARD. — " And you found two letters in one of the pockets ? "

WITNESS. — " Yes. "

Sir EDWARD. — " Who from ? "

WITNESS. — " From Mr Wilde to Lord Alfred. "

Sir EDWARD. — " How did they begin ? "

WITNESS. — " One was addressed, " Dear Alfred ", and the other to " Dear Bogie ". "

SOLICITOR-GENERAL. — " When did you first meet Lord Alfred ? "

WITNESS. — " At Taylor's rooms in Little College Street. "

SOLICITOR-GENERAL. — " Then you visited him at the University ? "

WITNESS. — " Yes. "

The Solicitor-General then proceeded to ask the witness as to the terms upon which Wilde and Lord Alfred appeared to be ; but this has been a prohibited topic from first to last and was now successfully objected to.

Charles Parker was called and he repeated his evidence at great length, relating the most disgusting facts in a perfectly serene manner. He said that Wilde invariably began his " campaign "—before arriving at the final nameless act—with indecencies. He used to require the witness to do what is vulgarly known as " tossing him off ", explained Parker quite unabashed, " and he would often do the same to me. He suggested two or three times that I should permit him to insert " it " in my mouth, but I never allowed that. " He gave other details equally shocking.

A few other witnesses were examined, and the rest of the day having been spent in the reading over

of the evidence, Sir Edward Clarke submitted that in respect of certain counts of the indictment there was no evidence to go to the jury.

The Solicitor-General submitted that there was ample evidence to go to the jury, who alone could decide as to whether or not it was worthy of belief.

The Judge said he thought the point in respect to the Savoy Hotel incident was just on the line, but he thought that the wiser and safer course was to allow the count in respect of this matter to go to the jury. At the same time, he felt justified, if the occasion should arise, in reserving the point for the Court of Appeal. He was inclined to think it was a matter, the responsibility of deciding which, rested with the jury.

Sir Edward Clarke submitted next that there was no corroboration of the evidence of this witness. The letters of Shelley pointed to the inference that the latter might have been the victim of delusions, and, judging from his conduct in the witness-box, he appeared to have a peculiar sort of exaltation in and for himself.

The Solicitor-General maintained that Shelley's evidence was corroborated as far as it could possibly be. Of course, in a case of this kind there was an enormous difficulty in producing corroboration of

eye-witnesses to the actual commission of the alleged act.

The judge held that Shelley must be treated on the footing of an accomplice. He adhered, after a most careful consideration of the point, to his former view, that there was no corroboration of the nature required by the Act to warrant conviction, and therefore he felt justified in withdrawing that count from the jury.

Sir Edward Clarke made the same submission in the case of Wood.

The Solicitor General protested against any decision being given on these questions other than by a verdict of the jury. In his opinion the case of the man Wood could not be withheld from the jury. He submitted that there was every element of strong corroboration of Wood's story, having regard especially to the strange and suspicious circumstances under which Wilde and Wood became acquainted.

Sir Edward Clarke quoted from the summing-up of Mr. Justice Charles on the last trial relative to the directions which he gave the jury in the law respecting the corroboration of the evidence of an accomplice.

The judge was or opinion that the count affecting

Wood ought to go to the jury, and he gave reasons why it ought not to be withheld.

Sir Edward Clarke after a private passage of arms with the Solicitor-General in respect to the need for corroborative evidence, then began a brief, but able appeal to the jury on behalf of his client, after which Wilde entered the witness-box. He formally denied the allegations against him. Sir Frank Lockwood, in cross-examination : " Now, Mr. Wilde, I should like you to tell me where Lord A. Douglas is now?"

WITNESS. — " He is in Paris, at the Hotel des Deux Mondes."

Sir FRANK. — " How long has he been there?"

WITNESS. — " Three weeks."

Sir FRANK. — " Have you been in communication with him?"

WITNESS. — " Certainly. These charges are founded on sand. Our friendship is founded on a rock. There has been no need to cancel our acquaintance."

Sir FRANK. — " Was Lord Alfred in London at the time of the trial of the Marquis of Queensberry?"

WITNESS. — " Yes, for about three weeks. He went abroad at my request before the first trial on these counts came on."

Sir FRANK. — "May we take it that the two letters from you to him were samples of the kind you wrote him?"

WITNESS. — "No. They were exceptional letters born of the two exceptional letters he sent to me. It is possible, I assure you, to express poetry in prose."

Sir FRANK. — "I will read one of these prose-poem letters. Do you think this line is decent, addressed to a young man? "Your rose-red lips which are made for the music of song and the madness of kissing."

WITNESS. — "It was like a sonnet of Shakespeare. It was a fantastic, extravagant way of writing to a young man. It does not seem to be a question of whether it is proper or not."

Sir FRANK. — "I used the word decent."

WITNESS. — "Decent, oh yes."

Sir FRANK. — "Do you think you understand the word, Sir?

WITNESS. — "I do not see anything indecent in it, it was an attempt to address in beautiful phraseology a young man who had much culture and charm."

Sir FRANK. — "How many times have you been

in the College Street 'snuggery' of the man Taylor?"

WITNESS. — "I do not think more than five or six times."

Sir FRANK. — "Who did you meet there?"

WITNESS. — "Sidney Mavor and Schwabe—I cannot remember any others. I have not been there since I met Wood there."

Sir FRANK. — "With regard to the Savoy Hotel Witnesses?"

WITNESS. — "Their evidence is quite untrue."

Sir FRANK. — "You deny that the bed-linen was marked in the way described?"

WITNESS. — I do not examine bed-linen when I arise.. I am not a housemaid."

Sir FRANK. — "Were the stains there, Sir?"

WITNESS. — "If they were there, they were not caused in the way the Prosecution most filthily suggests."

Sir EDWARD CLARKE, after a slight "breeze" with the Solicitor-General as to the right to the last word to the jury, then addressed that devoted band of men for the third time, and asked for the acquittal of his client on all the counts.

Sir Frank Lockwood also addressed the jury and the Court then adjoined.

Next day the Solicitor-General, resuming his speech on behalf of the Crown dealt in details with the arguments of Sir E. Clarke in defence of Wilde, and commented in strong terms on observations that he made respecting the lofty situation of Wilde, with his literary accomplishments, for the purpose of influencing the judgment of the young. He said that the jury ought to discard absolutely any such appeal, to apply simply their common-sense to the testimony ; and to form a conclusion on the evidence, which he submitted fully established the charges.

He was commenting on another branch of the case, when Sir E. Clarke interposed on the ground that the learned Solicitor-General was alluding to incidents connected with another trial. The Solicitor-General maintained that he was strictly within his rights, and the Judge held that the latter was entitled to make the comments objected to. "My learned friend does not appear to have gained a great deal by his superfluity of interruption", remarked the Solicitor-General suavely, and the Court laughed loudly. The Judge said that this sort of thing was most offensive to him. It was painful enough to have to try such a case and keep the scales of justice evenly balanced without the Court being pestered with meaningless laughter and applause. If such

conduct were repeated he would have the Court cleared.

The Solicitor-General then criticised the answers given by Wilde to the charges, which explanations he submitted, were not worthy of belief. The jury could not fail to put the interpretation on the conduct of the accused that he was a guilty man and they ought to say so by their verdict.

The Judge, in summing-up, referred to the difficulties of the case in some of its features. He regretted, that if the conspiracy counts were unnecessary, or could not be established, they should have been placed in the indictment. The jury must not surrender their own independent judgment in dealing with the facts and ought to discard everything which was not relevant to the issue before them, or did not assist their judgment.

He did not desire to comment more than he could help about Lord Alfred Douglas or the Marquis of Queensberry, but the whole of this lamentable enquiry arose through the defendant's association with Lord A. Douglas.

He did not think that the action of the Marquis of Queensberry in leaving the card at the defendant's club, whatever motives he had, was that of a gentleman. The jury were entitled to consider that

these alleged acts happened some years ago. They ought to be the best judges as to the testimony of the witnesses and whether it was worthy of belief.

The letters written by the accused to Lord A. Douglas were undoubtedly open to suspicion, and they had an important bearing on Wood's evidence. There was no corroboration of Wood as to the visit to Tite Street, and if his story had been true, he thought that some corroboration might have been obtained. Wood belonged to the vilest class of person which Society was pestered with, and the jury ought not to believe his story unless satisfactorily corroborated.

Their decision must turn on the character of the first introduction of Wilde to Wood. Did they believe that Wilde was actuated by charitable motives or by improper motives?

The foreman of the jury, interposing at this stage, asked whether a warrant had been issued for the arrest of Lord Alfred Douglas and if not, whether it was intended to issue one.

The Judge said he could not tell, but he thought not. It was a matter they could not now discuss. The granting of a warrant depended not upon the inferences to be drawn from the letters referred to in the case, but on the production of evidence of

specific acts. There was a disadvantage in speculating on this question. They must deal with the evidence before them and with that alone. The foreman said, "If we are to deduce from the letters it applies to Lord Alfred Douglas equally as to the defendant".

THE JUDGE. — "In regard to the question as to the absence of Lord A. Douglas, I warn you not to be influenced by any consideration of the kind. All that they knew was that Lord A. Douglas went to Paris shortly after the last trial and had remained there since. He felt sure that if the circumstances justified it, the necessary proceedings could be taken."

His lordship dealt with each of the charges, and the evidence in support of them, and he then, after thanking the jury for the patient manner in which they had attended to the case, left the issues in their hands.

The jury retired to consider their verdict at half past three o'clock and at half past five they returned into Court.

THE VERDICT

Amidst breathless excitement, the Foreman, in answer to the usual formal questions, announced the verdict, "Guilty".

Sir Edward CLARKE. — "I apply, my lord, for a postponement of sentence."

The JUDGE. — "I must certainly refuse that request. I can only characterise the offences as the worst that have ever come under my notice. I have, however, no wish to add to the pain that must be felt by the defendants. I sentence both Wilde and Taylor to two years imprisonment with hard labour."

The sentence was met with some cries of "shame" "a scandalous verdict", "unjust," by certain persons in Court. The two prisoners appeared dazed and Wilde especially seemed ready to faint as he was hurried out of sight to the cells.

* * *

Thus perished by his own act a man who might have made a lasting mark in British Literature and secured for himself no mean place in the annals of his time.

He forfeited, in the pursuit of forbidden pleasures,

if pleasures they can be called, all and everything that made life dear.

He entered upon his incarceration bankrupt in reputation, in friends, in pocket, and had not even left to him the poor shreds of his own self-esteem.

He went into gaol, knowing that if he emerged alive, the darkness would swallow him up and that his world—the spheres which had delighted to honour him—would know him no more.

He had covered his name with infamy and sank his own celebrity in a slough of slime and filth.

He would die to leave behind him what? — the name of a man who was absolutely governed by his own vices and to whom no act of immorality was too foul or horrible.

Oscar Wilde emerged from prison in every way a broken man. The wonderful descriptive force of the *Ballad of Reading Gaol;* the perfect, torturing self-analysis of *De Profundis* speak eloquently of powers unimpaired; but they were the swan-songs of a once great mind. All his abilities had fled. He seemed unable to concentrate his mind upon anything. He took up certain subjects, played with them, and wearied of them in a day. French authors did not ostracise the erratic English genius when he hid himself amongst them and they honestly

endeavoured to find him employment. But his faculties had been blunted by the horrors of prison life. His epigrams had lost their edge. His aphorisms were trite and aimless. He abandoned every subject he took up, in despair. His mind died before his body. He suffered from a complete mental atrophy. A nightingale cannot sing in a cage. A genius cannot flourish in a prison. He died in two years and is now—the merest memory! Let us remember this of him : if he sinned much, he suffered much.

Peace to his ashes!

HIS LAST BOOK

AND HIS LAST YEARS IN PARIS

By "A"

(LORD ALFRED DOUGLAS?)

The following three articles, two of them from the "St James's Gazette" and one from the "Motorist", are marked with so much good sense and dissipate so many errors touching Oscar Wilde's last Years in Paris that the publisher deemed it a duty to reproduce them here as a permanent answer to the wild legends circulated about the subject of this book.

OSCAR WILDE

His last Book and his last Years

The publication of Oscar Wilde's last book, "De Profundis," has revived interest in the closing scenes of his life, and we to-day print the first of two articles dealing with his last years in Paris from a source which puts their authenticity beyond question.

The one question which inevitably suggested itself to the reader of "De Profundis," was, "What was the effect of his prison reflections on his subsequent life?" The book is full not only of frank admissions of the error of his ways, but of projects for his future activity. "I hope," he wrote, in reply to some criticisms on the relations of art and morals, "to live long enough to produce work of such a character that I shall be able at the end of my days to say, "Yes, that is just where the artistic life leads a man!" He mentions in particular two subjects on which he proposed to write, "Christ as the Precursor of the Romantic Movement in Life" and "The Artistic

Life Considered in its Relation to Conduct." These resolutions were never carried out, for reasons some of which the writer of the following article indicates.

Oscar Wilde was released from prison in May, 1897. He records in his letters the joy of the thought that at that time "both the lilac and the laburnum will be blooming in the gardens." The closing sentences of the book may be recalled: "Society, as we have constituted it, will have no place for me, has none to offer; but Nature, whose sweet rains fall on unjust and just alike, will have clefts in the rocks where I may hide, and secret valleys in whose silence I may weep undisturbed. She will hang the night with stars so that I may walk abroad in the darkness without stumbling, and send the wind over my footprints so that none may track me to my hurt: she will cleanse me in great waters, and with bitter herbs make me whole".

He died in November, 1900, three years and a half after his release from Reading Gaol.

Monsieur Joseph Renaud, whose translation of Oscar Wilde's "Intentions" has just appeared in Paris, has given a good example of how history is made in his preface to that work. He recounts an obviously imaginary meeting between himself and Oscar Wilde in a bar on the Boulevard des Italiens. He concludes the episode, such as it is, with these words: "Nothing remained of him but his musical

voice and his large blue childlike eyes." Oscar Wilde's eyes were curious—long, narrow, and green. Anything less childlike it would be hard to imagine. To the physiognomist they were his most remarkable feature, and redeemed his face from the heaviness that in other respects characterised it. So much for M. Joseph Renaud's powers of observation.

The complacent unanimity with which the chroniclers of Oscar Wilde's last years in Paris have accepted and spread the "legend" of his life in that city is remarkable, and would be exasperating considering its utter falsity to anyone who was not aware of their incompetence to deal with the subject. Scarcely one of his self-constituted biographers had more than the very slightest acquaintance with him, and their records and impressions of him are chiefly made up of stale gossip and secondhand anecdotes. The stories of his supposed privations, his frequent inability to obtain a square meal, his lonely and tragic death in a sordid lodging, and his cheap funeral are all grotesquely false.

True, Oscar Wilde, who for several years before his conviction hat been making at least £5,000 a year, found it very hard to live on his rather precarious income after he came out of prison; he was often very "hard up," and often did not know where to

turn for a coin, but I will undertake to prove to anyone whom it may concern that from the day he left prison till the day of his death his income averaged at least £400 a year. He had, moreover, far too many devoted friends in Paris ever to be in need of a meal provided he would take the trouble to walk a few hundred yards or take a cab to one of half a dozen houses. His death certainly was tragic—deaths are apt to be tragic—but he was surrounded by friends when he died, and his funeral was not cheap; I happen to have paid for it in conjunction with another friend of his, so I ought to know.

He did not become a Roman Catholic before he died. He was, at the instance of a great friend of his, himself a devout Catholic, "received into the Church" a few hours before he died; but he had then been unconscious for many hours, and he died without ever having any idea of the liberty that had been taken with his unconscious body. Whether he would have approved or not of the step taken by his friend is a matter on which I should not like to express a too positive opinion, but it is certain that it would not do him any harm, and, apart from all questions of religion and sentiment, it facilitated the arrangements which had to be made for his interment in a Catholic country, in view of the fact that no

member of his family took any steps to claim his body or arrange for his funeral.

Having disposed of certain false impressions in regard to various facts of his life and death in Paris, I may turn to what are less easily controlled and examined theories as to that life. Without wishing to be paradoxical, or harshly destructive of the carefully cherished sentiment of poetic justice so dear to the British mind (and the French mind, too, for that matter), I give it as my firm opinion that Oscar Wilde was, on the whole, fairly happy during the last years of his life. He had an extraordinarily buoyant and happy temperament, a splendid sense of humour, and an unrivalled faculty for enjoyment of the present. Of course, he had his bad moments, moments of depression and sense of loss and defeat, but they were not of long duration. It was part of his pose to luxuriate a little in the details of his tragic circumstances. He harrowed the feelings of many of those whom he came across; words of woe poured from his lips; he painted an image of himself, destitute, abandoned, starving even (I have heard him use the word after a very good dinner at Paillard's); as he proceeded he was caught by the pathos of his own words, his beautiful voice trembled with emotion, his eyes swam with tears; and then,

suddenly, by a swift, indescribably brilliant, whimsical touch, a swallow-wing flash on the waters of eloquence, the tone changed and rippled with laughter, bringing with it his audience, relieved, delighted, and bubbling into uncontrollable merriment.

He never lost his marvellous gift of talking; after he came out of prison he talked better than before. Everyone who knew him really before and after his imprisonment is agreed about that. His conversation was richer, more human, and generally on a higher intellectual level. In French he talked as well as in English; to my own English ear his French used to seem rather laboured and his accent too marked, but I am assured by Frenchmen who heard him talk that such was not the effect produced on them.

He explained to me his inability to write, by saying that when he sat down to write he always inevitably began to think of his past life, and that this made him miserable and upset his spirits. As long as he talked and sat in cafés and "watched life," as his phrase was, he was happy, and he had the luck to be a good sleeper, so that only the silence and self-communing necessary to literary work brought him visions of his terrible sufferings in the past and made his old wounds bleed again. My own theory as to his literary sterility at this

period is that he was essentially an interpreter of life, and that his existence in Paris was too narrow and too limited to stir him to creation. At his best he reflected life in a magic mirror, but the little corner of life he saw in Paris was not worth reflecting. If he could have been provided with a brilliant "entourage" of sympathetic listeners as of old and taken through a gay season in London, he would have begun to write again. Curiously enough, society was the breath of life to him, and what he felt more than anything else in his "St. Helena" in Paris, as he often told me, was the absence of the smart and pretty women who in the old days sat at his feet!

A.

OSCAR WILDE'S

LAST YEARS IN PARIS. -- II

The French possess the faculty, very rare in England, of differentiating between a man and his work. They are utterly incapable of judging literary work by the moral character of its author. I have never yet met a Frenchman who was able to comprehend the attitude of the English public towards Oscar Wilde after his release from prison. They were completely mystified by it. An eminent French man-of-letters said to me one day : " You have a man of genius, he commits crimes, you put him in prison, you destroy his whole life, you take away his fortune you ruin his health, you kill his mother, his wife, and his brother *(sic)*, you refuse to speak to him, you exile him from your country. That is very severe. In France we should never so treat a man of genius, but *enfin ça peut se comprendre.* But not content with that, you taboo his books and his plays, which before you enjoyed and admired, and *pour comble de*

tout you are very angry if he goes into a restaurant and orders himself some dinner. *Il faut pourtant qu'il mange ce pauvre homme!"* If I had been representing the British public in an official capacity I should have probably given expression to its views and furnished a sufficient repartee to my voluble French friend by replying: *"Je n'en vois pas la nécessité."*

Fortunately for Oscar Wilde, the French took another view of the attitude to adopt towards a man who has offended against society, and who has been punished for it. Never by a word or a hint did they show that they remembered that offence, which, in their view, had been atoned for and wiped out. Oscar Wilde, remained for them always *un grand homme, un maître* a distinguished man, to be treated with deference and respect and, because he had suffered much, with sympathy. It says a great deal for the innate courtesy and chivalry of the French character that a man in Oscar Wilde's position, as well known by sight, as he once remarked to me, as the Eiffel Tower, should have been able to go freely about in theatres, restaurants, and cafés without encountering any kind of hostility or even impertinent curiosity.

It was this benevolent attitude of Paris towards him that enabled him to live and, in a fashion, to

enjoy life. His audience was sadly reduced and precarious, and except on some few occasions it was of inferior intellectual calibre; but still he had an audience, and an audience to him was everything. Nor was he altogether deprived of the society of men of his own class and value. Many of the most brilliant young writers in France were proud to sit at his feet and enjoy his brilliant conversation, chief among whom I may mention that accomplished critic and essayist, Monsieur Ernest Lajeunesse, who is the author of what is perhaps the best posthumous notice of him that has been published in France in that excellent magazine, the "Revue blanche"; among older men who kept up their friendship with him, Octave Mirbeau, Moréas, Paul Fort, Henri Bauer, and Jean Lorrain may be mentioned.

In contrast to this attitude taken up towards him by so many distinguished and eminent men, I cannot refrain from recalling the attitude adopted by the general run of English-speaking residents in Paris. For the credit of my country I am glad to be able to put them down mostly as Americans, or at any rate so Americanised by the constant absorption of "American drinks" as to be indistinguishable from the genuine article. These gentlemen "guessed they didn't want Oscar Wilde to be sitting around"

in the bars where they were in the habit of shedding the light of their presence, and from one of these establishments Oscar Wilde was requested by the proprietor to withdraw at the instance of one of our "American cousins" who is now serving a term of two years, penal servitude for holding up and robbing a bank!

Oscar Wilde, to do him justice, bore this sort of rebuff with astonishing good temper and sweetness. His sense of humour and his invincible self-esteem kept him from brooding over what to another man might have appeared intolerable, and he certainly possessed the philosophical temperament to a greater extent than any other man I have ever come across. Every now and then one or other of the very few faithful English friends left to him would turn up in Paris and take him to dinner at one of the best restaurants, and anyone who met him on one of these occasions would have found it difficult to believe that he had ever passed through such awful experiences. Whether he was expounding some theory, grave or fantastic, embroidering it the while with flashes of impromptu wit or deepening it with extraordinary and intimate learning (for, as Ernest Lajeunesse says, *he knew everything*), or whether he was "keeping the table in a roar" with his delight-

fully whimsical humour, summer-lightning that flashed and hurt no one, he was equally admirable. To have lived in his lifetime and not to have heard him talk is as though one had lived for years at Athens without going to look at the Parthenon.

I wish I could remember one-hundredth part of the good things he said. He was extraordinarily quick in answer and repartee, and anyone who says that his wit was the result of preparation and midnight oil can never have heard him speak. I remember once at dinner a friend of his who had formerly been in the "Blues," pointing out that in the opening stanza of "The Ballad of Reading Jail" he had made a mistake in speaking of the "scarlet coat" of the man who was hanged; he was, as the dedication of the poem says, a private in the "Blues," and his coat would therefore naturally not be scarlet. The lines go—

> He did not wear his scarlet coat,
> For blood and wine are red.

"Well, what could I do," said Oscar Wilde plaintively, "I couldn't very well say

> He did not wear his azure coat,
> For blood and wine are blue—

could I?"

The last time I saw him was about three months before he died. I took him to dinner at the Grand Café. He was then perfectly well and in the highest spirits. All through dinner he kept me delighted and amused. Only afterwards, just before I felt him, he became rather depressed. He actually told me that he didn't think he was going to live long; he had a presentiment, he said. I tried to turn it off into a joke, but he was quite serious. "Somehow," he said, "I don't think I shall live to see the new century." Then a long pause. "If another century began, and I was still alive, it would be really more than the English could stand." And so I left him, never to see him alive again.

Just before he died he came to, after a long period of unconsciousness and said to a faithful friend who sat by his bedside, "I have had a dreadful dream; I dreamt that I dined with the dead." "My dear Oscar," replied his friend, "I am sure you were the life and soul of the party." "Really, you are sometimes very witty," replied Oscar Wilde, and I believe those are his last recorded words. The jest was admirable and in his own *genre;* it was prompted by ready wit and kindness, and because of it Oscar Wilde went off into his last unconscious phase, which

lasted for twelve hours, with a smile on his lips. I cherish a hope that it is also prophetic, Death would have no terrors for me if only I were sure of "dining with the dead" (1).

(1) Both of the articles given above appeared for the first time in the St., James's Gazette.

"DE PROFUNDIS"

A Criticism by "A"

(LORD ALFRED DOUGLAS?)

" The English are very fond of a man who admits he has been wrong ".

(The Ideal Husband).

"DE PROFUNDIS"

A Criticism by

Lord Alfred Douglas

In a painful passage in this interesting posthumous book (it takes the form of a letter to an unnamed friend), Oscar Wilde relates how, on November the 13th, 1895, he stood for half an hour on the platform of Clapham Junction, handcuffed and in convict dress, surrounded by an amused and jeering mob. "For a year after that was done to me," he writes, "I wept every day at the same hour and for the same space of time." That was before he had discovered or thought he had discovered that his terrible experiences in prison, his degradation and shame were a part, and a necessary part, of his artistic life, a completion of his incomplete soul. After he had learnt humility in the bitterest school

that "man's inhumanity to man" provides for unwilling scholars, after he had drained the cup of sorrow to the dregs, after his spirit was broken—he wrote this book in which he tried to persuade himself and others that he had learnt by suffering and despair what life and pleasure had never taught him.

If Oscar Wilde's spirit, returning to this world in a malicious mood, had wished to devise a pleasant and insinuating trap for some of his old enemies of the press, he could scarcely have hit on a better one than this book. I am convinced it was written in passionate sincerity at the time, and yet it represents a mere mood and an unimportant one of the man who wrote it, a mood too which does not even last through the 150 pages of the book. "The English are very fond of a man who admits he has been wrong," he makes one of his characters in "The Ideal Husband" say, and elsewhere in this book he compares the advantages of pedestals and pillories in their relation to the public's attitude towards himself. Well here he is in the pillory, and here also is Mr. Courtney in the "Daily Telegraph" getting quite fond of him for the very first time. Here is Oscar Wilde, "a genius," "incontestably one of the greatest dramatists of modern times" as he is now graciously allowed to be, turning up unexpec-

tedly with an admission that he was in the wrong, and telling us that his life and his art would have been incomplete without his imprisonment, that he has learnt humility and found a new mode of expression in suffering. He is "purged by grief," "chastened by suffering," and everything, in short, that he should be, and Mr. Courtney is touched and pleased. What Mr. Courtney and others have failed to realise, and what Wilde himself did realise very soon after he wrote this interesting but rather pathetically ineffective book, is that the mood which produced it was no other than the first symptom of that mental and physical disease generated by suffering and confinement which culminated in the death of its gifted and unfortunate author a few years later. As long as the spirit of revolt was left in Oscar Wilde, so long was left the fire of creative genius. When the spirit of revolt died, the flame began to subside, and continued to subside gradually with spasmodic flickers till its ultimate extinction. "I have got to make everything that has happened good for me." He writes, "The plank bed, the loathsome food, the hard rope shredded into oakum till one's finger tips grow dull with pain, the menial offices with which each day begins, the harsh orders that routine seems to necessitate, the dreadful dress that

makes sorrow grotesque to look at, the silence, the solitude, the shame—each and all these things I have to transform into a spiritual experience. There is not a single degradation of the body which I must not try and make into a spiritualising of the soul." But, alas ! plank beds, loathsome food, menial offices, and oakum picking do not spiritualise the soul ; at any rate, they did not spiritualise Oscar Wilde's soul. The only effect they had was to destroy his magnificent intellect, and even, as some passages in this book show to temporarily cloud his superb sense of humour. The return of freedom gave him back the sense of humour, and the wreck of his magnificent intellect served him so well to the end of his life that, although he had hopelessly lost the power of concentration necessary to the production of literary work, he remained to the day of his death the most brilliant and the most intellectual talker in Europe.

It must not be supposed, however, that this book is not a remarkable book and one which is not worth careful reading. There are fine prose passages in it, and occasional felicities of phrase which recall the Oscar Wilde of " The House of Pomegranates " and the " Prose-Poems," and here and there rather unexpectedly comes an epigram like this for example : " There were Christians before Christ. For that

we should be grateful. The unfortunate thing is that there have been none since." True, he spoils the epigram by adding, "I make one exception, St. Francis of Assisi." A concession to the tyranny of facts and the relative importance of sincerity to style, which is most uncharacteristic of the "old Oscar." Nevertheless, the trace of the master hand is still visible, and the book contains much that is profound and subtle on the philosophy of Christ as conceived by this modern evangelist of the gospel of Life and Literature. One does not travel further than the 33rd page of the book before finding glaring and startling inconsistencies in the mental attitude of the writer towards his fate, for whereas on page 18 in a rather rhetorical passage he speaks of the "eternal disgrace" he had brought on the "noble and honoured name" bequeathed him by his father and mother, on page 33 "Reason" tells him "that the laws under which he was convicted are wrong and unjust laws, and the system under which he has suffered a wrong and unjust system." But this is the spirit of revolt not quite crushed. He says that if he had been released a year sooner, as in fact he very nearly was, he would have left his prison full of rage and bitterness, and without the treasure of his new-found "Humility." I am unregenerate enough to wish

that he had brought his rage and bitterness with him out of prison. True, he would never have written this book if he had come out of prison a year sooner, but he would almost certainly have written several more incomparable comedies, and we who reverenced him as a great artist in words, and mourned his downfall as an irreparable blow to English Literature would have been spared the rather painful experience of reading the posthumous praise now at last so lavishly given to what certainly cannot rank within measurable distance of his best work. A.

From "*The Motorist and Traveller*" (March 1, 1905).

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successfully that Thaïs forsakes her life of pleasure, and ultimately expires in the odour of sanctity. *Custodes, sed quis custodiet ipsos?* Paphnutius has deceived himself, and has failed to perceive that what he took for zeal for a lost soul was in reality but human desire for a fair face. The monk, who has won Heaven for the beautiful sinner, loses it himself for love of her, and is left at the end, baffled and blaspheming, before the dead body of the woman he has loved all the time without knowing that he loved her.

It is impossible for the reviewer to convey any adequate notion of the subtle skill with which the author deals with a delicate but intensely human theme, Alike as a piece of psychical analysis and as a picture of the age, this book stands head and shoulders above any that we have ever read about the period with which it deals. It is a work of rare beauty, and, we may add, of profound moral truth, albeit not written precisely *virginibus puerisque*.

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NOTICE

« **INTENTIONS** » est un des ouvrages les plus curieux qui se puisse lire. On y trouve tout l'esprit, si paradoxal, toute l'étonnante culture du brillant écrivain que fut **Oscar WILDE.**

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Hugues Rebell fit donc cette nécessaire traduction, et, dit l'éditeur dans une note préliminaire, « c'est le dernier travail auquel il put se livrer. Il nous en remit les derniers feuillets peu de jours avant sa mort ». Rebell devait préfacer ce travail d'une étude sur la vie et les œuvres du poète anglais, étude qu'il ne put qu'ébaucher, malheureusement, car, avec Gide, —

mais celui-ci d'un point de vue différent et peut-être opposé, — il était exclusivement qualifié pour saisir, démêler et interpréter l'étrange personnalité de Wilde. Quelques fragments de cette étude nous sont donnés cependant et ils nous font très vivement regretter que le vigoureux et paradoxal auteur de l'*Union des Trois Aristocraties* n'ait pu achever son travail.

Mais ce regret bien légitime se mitige grandement à mesure qu'on lit la belle préface de M. Charles Grolleau. Prenant pour épigraphe cette pensée de Pascal : « Je blâme également et ceux qui prennent le parti de louer l'homme, et ceux qui le prennent de le blâmer, et ceux qui le prennent de se divertir ; et je ne puis approuver que ceux qui cherchent en gémissant », M. Grolleau s'efforce de comprendre et de résoudre ce « douloureux problème » que fut Wilde. Et il le fait avec cette réserve et ce parfait bon goût que doivent s'imposer les véritables amis et les sincères admirateurs d'Oscar Wilde. Il y a plus, dans ces cinquante pages : il y a l'une des meilleures études qui aient jamais été faites du brillant dramaturge. Bien qu'il s'en défende, M. Grolleau, dans cette langue élégante et harmonieuse que lui connaissent ceux qui ont lu ses beaux vers, réussit à discerner mieux et à mieux révéler que certaines diatribes « l'âme et la passion » de l'auteur de *De Profundis*.

Je me suis interdit d'écrire une biographie. Je ne connais que l'écrivain, et l'homme est trop vivant encore et si blessé ! J'ai la dévotion des plaies, et le plus beau rite de cette dévotion est le geste qui voile.

Toute « cette méditation sur une âme très belle » est écrite avec ce tact délicat et cette tendre sympathie. Ainsi, après avoir admiré ces émouvantes pages, le lecteur peut aborder dans un état d'esprit convenable les essais parfois déconcertants qui sont réunis sous le titre significatif d'*Intentions*. C'est dans cette belle édition qu'il faut les lire. On sait avec quel souci d'artiste M. Carrington établit ses volumes ; il n'y laisse pas de ces incroyables coquilles, de ces épais mastics qui ressemblent si fort à des contre-sens, et, sachant quel public intelligent et éclairé voudrait ce livre, il n'a pas eu l'idée saugrenue d'abîmer ses pages par d'inutiles notes assurant le lecteur par exemple que Dante a écrit la Divine Comédie, que Shelley fut un grand poète, que Keats mourut poitrinaire, que George Eliot était femme de lettres et Lancret peintre. Un portrait de l'auteur est reproduit en tête de cette excellente édition.

Henry-D. Davray.

(Extrait du " Mercure de France, " 15 septembre 1905).

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